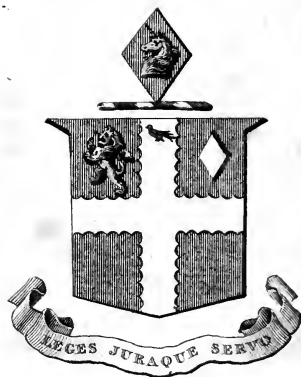
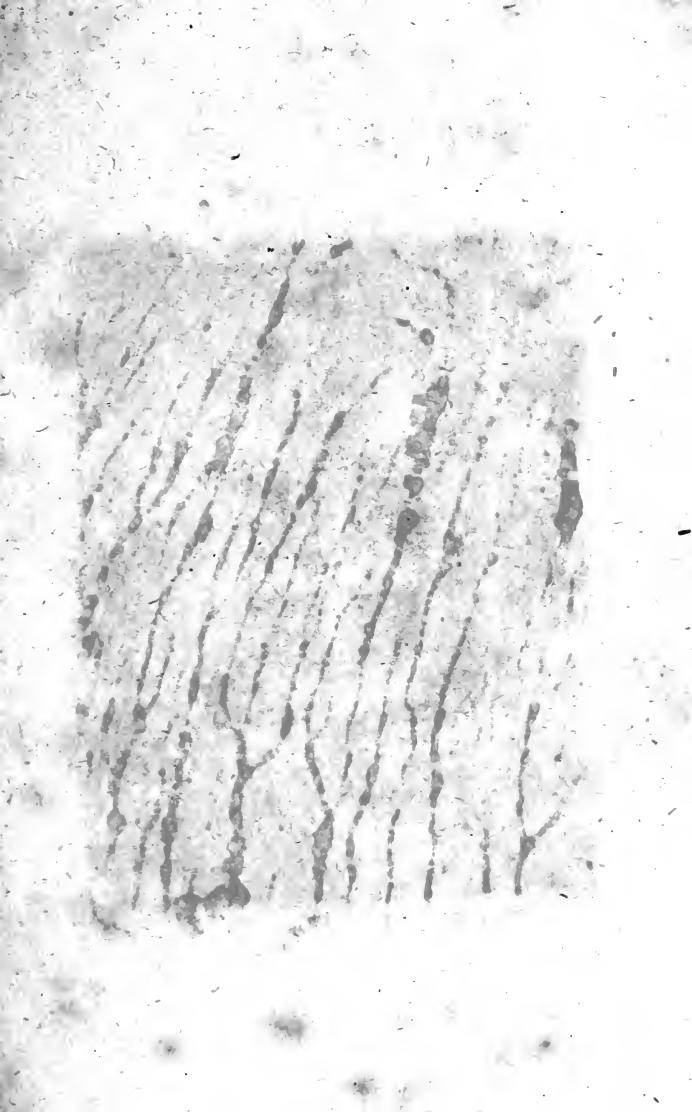


O. 1



Joseph Leigh.



THE DISCARDED SON.



A TALE.



Lane, Darling, and Co. Leadenhall-Street.



THE
DISCARDED SON;

OR,
HAUNT OF THE BANDITTI.

A Tale.

IN FIVE VOLUMES.

BY
REGINA MARIA ROCHE,
AUTHOR OF THE CHILDREN OF THE ABBEY, &c.

Thou hast been
As one in suffering all, that suffers nothing;
A man who Fortune's buffets and rewards
Has ta'en with equal thanks: and blest are they
Whose blood and judgment mingled are so well,
That they are not a pipe for Fortune's finger,
To sound what stop she please.

SHAKESPEARE.

VOL. III.

LONDON:
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THE DISCARDED SON.

CHAP. I.

“ When Fortune means to men most good,
She looks upon them with a threat’ning eye.”

SHAKESPEARE.

HAVING entered the Streights of Messina, the Italian shores appeared in view, exhibiting a variety of the most beautiful scenery, set off and heightened by the brilliant clearness of the atmosphere. In the enthusiasm it awakened, Osmond could not refrain from exclaiming, in the language of the poet,

“ Could Nature’s bounty satisfy the breast,
The sons of Italy were surely blest ;

Whatever fruits in different climes were found,
That proudly rise, or humbly court the ground;
Whatever blooms in torrid tracts appear,
Whose bright succession decks the varied year;
Whatever sweets salute the northern sky,
With vernal lives that blossom but to die:
These here disporting own the kindred soil,
Nor ask luxuriance from the planter's toil:
While sea-börn gales their gelid wings expand,
To winnow fragrance round the smiling land."

But human pleasure is liable to continual interruptions. As the vessel was doubling Cape di Spartivento, a galley suddenly bore down upon it, and, being unprepared for resistance, took it with little opposition.

The Count, who was all impatience to behold his dear aunt, and realise the plans he had formed for the amusement of Osmond, was nearly distracted at this unexpected event, and with his usual impetuosity would immediately have announced his rank to the pirates, and endeavoured to enter into a negociation with them for
the

the restoration of his liberty, but for Osmond's entreating him in a whisper not to be hasty in any thing he did on the present occasion, as he had not a doubt but that the knowledge of his rank would rather retard than accelerate his wishes.

"Well, my dear friend," replied the poor Count, with a mournful look, and in a low voice, "you shall guide me; but I trust you'll no longer deny that I am singularly unfortunate, that I am one of those unhappy beings over whom a kind of fatality seems to hang, counteracting and disappointing all their intentions."

Osmond was on the point of answering, when a smart blow on the back with the flat side of a cutlass prevented him; and turning with quickness he perceived a fierce and savage-looking man behind him, who, from his dress and the authority he assumed, he concluded to be the captain of these sea robbers—"Come, come, my young spark," cried he in Italian, on catching the eye of Osmond, "you and your

companion here must shift your quarters." So saying he took him by the arm and led him into the galley, as did one of his companions the Count. The crew of the captured vessel being secured under the hatches, and a few men put on board to manage it, the pirate, to the surprise of the Count, shaped his course towards Acerenza.

While securing the other prisoners, Osmond and the Count were locked up by themselves in the principal cabin, and had thus an opportunity afforded of conversing, of which the Count, in particular, eagerly availed himself.—“ Oh, miserable man that I am !” he exclaimed, striking his breast with violence, the moment he found himself again alone with Osmond ; “ oh, miserable man ! destined to be the incessant sport of fortune ! Oh, wretched life, in which there is nothing certain but death ! Though born to wealth and honours, yet here am I, doomed perhaps to pass the remainder of my days in slavery—
a slavery

a slavery the horrors of which will be aggravated by the idea of your being also dragged into it through my means."

"For heaven's sake, my dear Count," cried Osmond, who began to be seriously alarmed for his senses, so wild and disordered were his looks and gestures, "endeavour to moderate these transports. I make no doubt this affair will end better than you imagine."

"But should it not, should it not," demanded the Count, in apparent agony, and clasping his hands, "will you then be able to administer any consolation, to suggest any arguments calculated to assuage my misery?"

"I trust I shall," said Osmond, endeavouring to rally his own spirits (for he was not without his share of agitation at the situation in which he found himself), that he might be enabled to speak with calmness to the Count, such as had hitherto proved successful in subduing the violence of his emotions; "I trust I shall—trust I

shall be able to convince you, that in the midst of all their distresses, there remains to every sincere Christian that mixture of pure and genuine consolation which springs from the promises and hopes of the gospel; of what a singularly happy distinction this makes in their situation, beyond the state of those who are left without any thing to look to but a train of unknown causes and accidents, in which they see no light, no comfort; of the joyful hope we can entertain that the sufferings of the present time are but slight when compared with the happiness promised in the end to the virtuous; that evils besides, when borne with patience and dignity, improve and ennoble our characters, bring into exercise several of the manly and heroic virtues, and by the constancy and fidelity they call into action on earth, prepare us for the highest rewards in heaven; that moreover, from the present constitution of human nature, it is requisite for our well-being that they should be scattered

scattered in our path, since few of us can bear uninterrupted prosperity without being corrupted by it; the poisonous weeds that grow up in that too luxuriant soil require the hand of adversity to extirpate them. It is the experience of sorrow and distress that subdues the arrogance of pride, tames the violence of passion, softens the hardness of the selfish heart, and humanizes the temper to feel for the woes of others."

The Count here seized the hands of Osmond, and pressed them with fervor to his bosom.—"Oh my dear friend," with tearful eyes, he cried, "what would I give that I had the same command over my feelings that you have; that I had my mind stored with the same self-evident and divine truths that yours is; since I am satisfied, if that were the case, I should be a very different creature to what I now am, capable of supporting the hour of trial with fortitude, and administering consolation to myself and others; but from this

instant I am resolved to set about the conquest of myself—resolved to prove to you, that I have profited by your arguments and example. Yes, I'll no more be like a vane blown about by every gale. To convince you I am sincere, I wish to heaven some new trial was this moment to befall me. For from henceforth," he added, starting up with an altered voice and countenance,

" No terror to my view,
No frightful face of danger can be new ;
Inur'd to suffer, and resolv'd to bear,
The fates without my power shall be without my care."

Osmond did not altogether join him in the above wish, aware that to declaim against our errors was a much easier thing than to conquer them when of long standing.

Their conversation was at length interrupted by the entrance of the Captain and another man. The evening was by this time far advanced; and in a gruff voice the

the

the former demanded of his prisoners whether they would not turn in? To which the Count replied in the negative, adding, disturbed minds could feel but little inclined to repose.

“Well,” rejoined the Captain, but in the same surly tone, “you may follow your inclinations; we know how to treat prisoners well, who have the appearance of being able to pay for good treatment.”

“Depend on it,” said the Count eagerly, and starting from the seat on which he had just thrown himself, “there’s none we experience from you shall go unrewarded. Say what you demand for our release,” continued he, forgetful of all Osmond had said to him against precipitancy on the subject, “and ——”

“Patience, patience,” interrupted the Captain, with a grin of exultation, “I have too much business on my hands to engage in any other at present. The day after to-morrow, and you and I will talk over what you have mentioned.”

This speech, tending to convince Osmond there was but little danger of their being detained in captivity, calmed in a great degree the agitation of his mind. It failed, however, of producing a similar effect on the Count, owing to his anger at the delay of the negociation he wished to enter into; and thus, by the feelings he betrayed on the occasion, convinced Osmond that notwithstanding his recent assertions, he had not yet entered upon the task of reformation.

The Captain's companion having taken some provisions from a locker, they seated themselves at a table; and regardless of the presence of their prisoners, who sat at some distance from them, renewed a conversation in which they were engaged on entering the cabin.—“I tell you again,” cried the Captain, “you did wrong, very wrong, Varcelli, in persuading me to make the recent capture; for I am convinced, in consequence of the division of our crew it has occasioned, we shall not be able to carry the Marchese's plan into execution.”

“ Bless

“ Bless your heart,” replied the other, “ who have we to contend with but women? I bet you any wager, that with four men I achieve the business in hand.”

“ Hold, hold, not so fast, my friend,” returned the Captain; “ I see you know but little of the establishment of the castle of Acerenza by what you have said. Why to my knowledge there are never less than forty men-servants within it, all stout, strong, active fellows, and who would soon succeed in sending you and your four men to the devil, Mr. Varcelli. If I had not been obliged to divide my brave lads, by yielding to your avaricious wishes, I should not have doubted succeeding in the enterprize we have undertaken; but now, weakened as our force is, I have serious apprehensions of failing in it. A pretty thing it will be if we are compelled to give it up, and thus not only lose the reward promised us by the Marchese, but the chance we should have had, by persevering in it, of enriching ourselves with the treasures of Acerenza. Come, as you

have been the means of bringing me into a hobble, set your d—mnd plotting brains to work to get me out of it.”

While this discourse was passing, Osmond watched the Count with fear and trembling, terrified lest from the emotion he saw it had thrown him into, he should discover himself—a circumstance which he doubted not would occasion, if not their immediate destruction, at least their lasting captivity; as, from what he had heard of the Marchese Salvilina, he was convinced he was the person who had instigated the ruffians to the attack of Acerenza, for the purpose of either murdering or carrying off the Count, of whose not being there at present he understood he was ignorant.

The cabin being small, and the looks of the Captain and his comrade every now and then directed towards him and his friend, he could do nothing more than endeavour to catch the eyes of the Count, in order to give him a significant look, expressive of the necessity there was for silence;

silence; but in vain he tried to do this; the looks of the Count were rivetted upon the ruffians; and at length, to the utter dismay of Osmond, he passionately exclaimed, clasping his hands together, and looking up—"Gracious heaven! surely you will not permit such wickedness to triumph. You will not permit innocence and virtue to be injured with impunity."

"Hey ho! what's that you said, my spark?" cried the Captain, dropping his knife and fork, with which he had for some time been very busily employed, and turning, as did his companion Varcelli, a fiercely-inquiring look, first upon the Count and then on Osmond.

The Count instantly arose; Osmond also started from his seat; and perceiving, if he did not prevent his speaking, all he wished concealed would be betrayed, pushed him aside, and stepping before him, exclaimed, but not without giving him an expressive glance—"I'll tell you—I'll explain to you the cause of his exclamation."

"Be

“Be quick, then,” cried the Captain; “let me know without hesitation whether either of you know aught of the castle of Acerenza, or the family it belongs to?”

“Yes, yes, you shall be obeyed,” returned Osmond, slowly approaching the table, endeavouring to think of something plausible to say.

“Well, why don’t you begin,” cried the Captain.

“Ere I do,” rejoined Osmond, hesitatingly, and in order to gain a little more time for consideration, “will you favour me with a glass of brandy and water?”

“Varcelli, hand him the glass,” said the Captain gruffly.

Varcelli obeyed. Osmond kept the glass for a few minutes to his lips; and during this interval, recollected himself sufficiently to fabricate the following story for his insolent interrogator:—

“I perceive, from the exclamation of my friend, you have been led to imagine we know something of the Morati family.

In

In the supposition that we do, you are not mistaken."

"The devil I'm not!" vociferated the Captain, pushing back his chair from the table, in order to have a better opportunity of viewing Osmond.

"No," returned Osmond, with coolness, "you are not; though greatly so, if you imagine we are interested about any of the members of it.

"For several years a law-suit of considerable consequence has been carrying on between the houses of Morati and Tarento. To bring it to a conclusion, the evidence of two persons of the name of Alhama, father and uncle to my friend here (glancing at the Count), was a few months ago found to be necessary. Accordingly an inquiry was set on foot after them; and at length, though not without great difficulty, their residence being in a remote part of Spain, they were discovered, and induced to come to Italy. Previous to their arrival, it was ascertained that their

evidence was likely to occasion the suit to be decided in favour of the Tarento family. This circumstance instigated the haughty and sanguinary one of Morati to form the horrible project of assassinating them—a project they but too well succeeded in carrying into effect. My friend, on learning the dreadful fate of his two nearest and dearest relatives, and that their murderers, owing to their rank and consequence in the country, had met with no punishment for their crime, took a solemn vow never to rest till with his own hand he had inflicted an exemplary one on them. In short, to be candid—for since I have told so much I may as well tell you all—nothing short of the life of the Marchese Morati, and her nephews, the young Count Placentia, who was also concerned in the murder, will appease his vengeance. We were bound for her castle, the walls of which we intended scaling at night, when you captured us.”

“And pray who may you be?” demanded.

ed the Captain, surveying him with a scrutinizing look; "did the Morati family murder any of your kindred?"

"No," replied Osmond, with quickness, "but in injuring my friend, they injured me. You inquire who I am. I have been known some time to Don Alhama; and on his imparting his injuries to me, pledged my word to assist him in taking revenge for them."

"Well, well, 'tis a maxim with me never to interfere in what does not concern myself," cried the Captain, again drawing in his chair to the table, and filling himself out a bumper of brandy. "In a little time, upon certain conditions which I shall then explain to you, I shall make no objection to setting you and your friend free, to blow the castle of Acerenza to the devil if you chuse it."

Osmond bowed in token of gratitude, and then retreated from the table. In a few minutes after, the Captain and his companion quitted the cabin. The moment

ment the astonished Count heard them overhead—"For heaven's sake, my dear friend," he cried, in a low voice, and turning his eyes full upon Osmond, "what was your motive for fabricating such a story as you have just told?"

"This is no time for explaining," returned Osmond; "I can only assure you a very sufficient one, and entreat you to keep yourself composed, let you hear what you may; above all, to be silent with respect to yourself. Thank Heaven, it occurred to us to give Antonio a caution on the subject, ere he was removed from us."

"I will endeavour to act as you wish, my friend," replied the Count; "perhaps Heaven may enable us to frustrate the intentions of these ruffians with regard to Acerenza."

"I trust it may," cried Osmond; and in saying so, he said not only what he sincerely hoped, but was beginning to think might be the case; since, from the implicit credit the Captain appeared to give to his

his story, and his acknowledged want of hands for the business in agitation, he thought it probable as well as possible that he and his friend might be allowed to join the crew in their meditated attack upon the castle, and thus an opportunity afforded of alarming its inhabitants in time to put them on their guard.

The Captain shortly after returned to the cabin, still accompanied by Varcelli, who appeared to be his right-hand man; and soon after, in consequence of a hint he dropt, the Count and Osmond retired to their respective births.

Neither were inclined to repose; and even if they had, they would still have resisted the inclination, from the anxiety they felt to overhear the Captain and his associate. Nothing new, however, transpired from either.

They had the honour of breakfasting the next morning with them; soon after which they were left for several hours to themselves, during which they suffered no small inquietude,

inquietude, hints having dropt from the Captain while at breakfast of its being his intention to make an attack upon the castle of Acerenza in the course of the approaching night. At length Varcelli made his appearance, and told Osmond the Captain wanted to speak to him upon deck.

Thither Osmond immediately followed, with a heart palpitating with the hopes this summons gave rise to.—“Well, my friend,” cried the Captain, taking him by the arm the moment he appeared, and drawing him aside, “does the spark below continue in the same mind he was in yesterday?”—Osmond bowed.—“And are you as inclined as ever to aid him in his designs on the Morati family?”—Osmond again bent his head.—“Come, come, man,” proceeded the Captain, in a surly tone, and with a look which perfectly accorded with it, “speak out at once, and don’t be giving me any of your d—mnd dumb-show.”

“Our sentiments, then, with regard to
the

the Morati family have not experienced the least change," said Osmond.

"Then, since that is the case," cried the Captain joyfully, "we may all accomplish our respective wishes comfortably and pleasantly together. You must know that my crew is so weakened, owing to my having sent part on board the vessel you were in, that without two or three additional hands, I do not think it would be safe to venture to Acerenza. Now, rather than be at the trouble of sending to shore in quest of a few bravoës, I will let you and your friend accompany me thither to-night, and thus afford you a speedy opportunity of taking the revenge you thirst for, provided you give me up whatever valuables you have about you, as it is not my intention to ask you to return to the ship with me; and which, considering how ready I am to oblige you, and the handsome usage you have received from me, I think you cannot possibly object to."

"Assuredly not," returned Osmond,
eagerly

eagerly and delightedly. "Permit me to inform my friend of your kindness; for since the dreadful fate of his relations, he has been in a state of mind that renders caution necessary in communicating any thing to him calculated to affect his feelings."

"Very well, you shall; but remember," continued the Captain, in a jocose tone, and with a sly look, "no tricks upon travellers. I saw a handsome watch-chain in his fob, and several handsome rings on his fingers."

Osmond laid his hand upon his breast—"Trust to my honour," said he; "if all the things you saw are not forthcoming, I shall not ask you to fulfil your present generous intentions respecting us."

"That's an honest lad," returned the Captain, clapping him on the back; "but remember you tell your friend there must be no jabbering till we have done our work in the castle. About twelve, I intend landing; by which time, as there is

no

no moon at present, the night will be as dark as we could wish. By the help of scaling-ladders, we shall easily surmount the walls that encompass the castle. Our difficulties and dangers commence when we get within those; as in the centre of the outer court is a double row of low buildings, occupied by the male domestics."

"But what then?" asked Osmond, anxiously. "You reckon upon their all being asleep, or at any rate in bed, I conclude, before you make your entry."

"Why, yes. But as I was going to observe—whether up or abed, never being off their guard, too much caution cannot be used in passing their lodgings to the upper court, which once having got possession of, we may, by having the whole of the castle and all the rest of its inhabitants then completely in our power, bid them defiance."

"Never off their guard, do you say?"
cried

cried Osmond, with difficultly suppressed eagerness.

“No, they have always arms and lights beside them, in case of a surprise like the one I meditate; and which, from the situation of the castle on a lonely part of the coast, its owners have always been apprehensive of. So recollect, my friend, to keep in mind the necessity of circumspection; for once alarmed, and we have but little chance of succeeding in our enterprise.”

“Rely upon my making a proper use of what you have told me,” said Osmond, with sparkling eyes and a flushing cheek; “and now, with your permission, I’ll return to my friend below.”

He accordingly descended to the cabin, and found the poor Count the very picture of despair. He motioned him to the window, and in a low accent, and as briefly as possible, revealed to him the motive of his fabricated story to the Captain, and the result of it.

Extravagant

Extravagant as were the transports the Count had given way to on former occasions, they were trifling compared with those he now betrayed. He laughed and wept at the same instant, returned thanks to Heaven, and rapturously embracing Osmond, called him not only his preserver, but the preserver of his family. Then putting all his valuables into his hands,—“Here, here, my dear friend,” he cried, “let the rascal have all these immediately; and if not sufficient to satisfy his rapacity, let him send me a bond for any sum, and I will sign it.”

Osmond, again terrified for his senses, endeavoured to calm the transports which in his opinion endangered them, by reminding him of the fatal consequences that might result from the least imprudence, and the recent assurance he had given him of endeavouring to gain a command over himself—“In order to prove to me that you were sincere in giving it,”

continued he, " 'tis requisite that you should bear the present change in your prospects with moderation."

" My dear friend," cried the Count, gently pressing his arm, " rest assured that you shall never again see me so disturbed. But now, not to be all extasy, all transport, that I find we are on the point of regaining the liberty I feared was for ever lost to us, would, in my opinion, be to argue me possessed of a dull inanimate soul."

A reply from Osmond was prevented by the entrance of the Captain.

" Heyday, my young sparks," cried he, as he rushed in, " have you got to logger-heads, that you speak so loud? at least you, Don ——, I forget your name," glancing at the Count.

Osmond immediately deposited in his hands the valuables of the Count, accompanied by his own; and while with a greedy eye he was examining these, cast a
look

look of mingled sorrow and anger at the Count, which he returned with a deprecating one, expressive of his determination to conform himself without delay to the wishes of Osmond.

CHAP. II.

“ And therefore wert thou bred to virtuous knowledge,
And wisdom early planted in thy soul,
That thou might'st know to rule thy fiery passions,
To bind their rage, and stay their headlong course ;
To bear with accidents, and ev'ry chance
Of various life ; to struggle with adversity ;
To wait the leisure of the righteous gods ;
Till they, in their own good appointed hour,
Shall bid thy better days come forth at once,
A long and shining train ; till thou, well pleas'd,
Shall bow, and bless thy fate, and own the gods are just.”

Rowe's ULYSSES.

THE Captain's manner soon convincing them the sound of their voices was all he had heard, the alarm his words excited quickly subsided, and nothing further of any moment to them took place on board.

Long

Long before the midnight hour, the vessel was anchored within sight of the castle; and exactly at twelve, the party destined to attack it was landed beneath its walls, armed with pistols, cutlasses, and boarding-pikes. The walls, by means of scaling-ladders, were surmounted with ease. Osmond took care to be amongst the first who attempted them. The night was of a pitchy darkness—dark as the deed the pirate hoped to perpetrate beneath its mantle; but a glimmering light at a distance pointed out to Osmond the buildings occupied by the servants.

With cautious steps he drew away from the ruffians, and advancing up the court drew a pistol from his belt, and fired it. The consequence was such as he looked for. The domestics, alarmed, quickly sallied forth; some with arms, and others with torches. The moment they appeared—"The walls have been scaled by banditti, my friends," exclaimed Osmond; "be prompt in your measures, and they cannot escape."

“ This way, this way,” (to the utter astonishment of the domestics, who had no idea of his being then more than on his way to the castle) vociferated the Count, who unperceived had followed the steps of Osmond; but notwithstanding their astonishment, no time was lost in making inquiries; and after a slight scuffle the pirate and his crew were seized.

A servant then hastened to the inner court, to account to the Marchesa for the recent disturbance, and prepare her for the approaching interview with her nephew. By the time, therefore, he and his friend reached the castle, she, with several of her attendants, was ready to receive him.

Their meeting was truly affecting: for several minutes neither had power to express the mutual pleasure it gave rise to. When at length tears had a little relieved the fulness of their hearts, the Count, gently disengaging himself from the enfolding arms of the Marchesa, turned to Osmond, and taking him by the hand—

“ Behold,

“Behold, my dearest aunt,” he cried, as he led him towards her, “the person to whom, under Heaven, you are indebted for your present safety—to whom I am indebted for the power of congratulating you on it. But for his interposition, I should ere this, I make no doubt, have been no more. After saying this, it were superfluous to add, the obligations I owe him are unreturnable. Receive him, my dearest aunt—receive the Chevalier Munro as a second son. Trust me, the welcome and esteem which you may now grant him on my account, you will shortly accord him on his own.”

The Marchesa extended her hand, and taking Osmond's, pressed it to her lips and to her heart.

“Welcome. thrice welcome,” she said, “to Acerenza. Oh how unnecessary for the Count to desire me to receive as a son him to whom he informs me I am indebted for the preservation of his life!”

“The Count rates quite too highly,

Madam, the services I had the happiness of rendering him," returned Osmond, as with the warm glow of gratitude and sensibility diffusing itself over his cheek, he bowed respectfully on her hand. "He does more—he forgets that for any I conferred, I have received more than an adequate return. Yes, my dear Madam, believe me I am more a debtor than a creditor of the Count."

"Generous souls ever endeavour to make light of the obligations they confer," said the Marchesa: "but come," added she, "we'll change the subject for the present, for I am certain you both need refreshment; and besides I am all impatience to learn the particulars of the recent affair, to what circumstance your arriving at such a moment, and in such company, is owing."

As she spoke, she led the way to a table which the delighted and affectionate domestics had already spread with refreshments; and seating herself at it, with the
Count

Count on one hand and Osmond on the other, was soon gratified by the recital she wished to hear; when agitation impeded the utterance of the Count, Osmond taking up the story; and when modesty caused Osmond to pause, the Count impetuously pursuing it.

“ Good Heaven ! ” exclaimed the Marchesa, on their concluding; “ how wonderful are thy ways, in all how manifest thy wisdom and goodness ! How forcibly does what I have just heard convince me that we should never be impatient under afflictions ! Had you not been taken by the pirate,” addressing herself particularly to the Count, “ a meeting like the present would never in all probability have taken place ; and yet I dare say at the moment you were not a little disconcerted at the circumstance.”

The Count blushed, and Osmond involuntarily smiled at these words, which the Marchesa perceiving, also smiled herself, but in a manner which gave Osmond to

understand she was thoroughly acquainted with the temper of her nephew.

After two hours passed at table, she insisted on the friends retiring to repose. Accordingly, Osmond was conducted to a magnificent chamber, where fatigue, united to the happy consciousness of security, quickly closed his eyes.

On awaking in the morning, he touched a bell, as he had been desired to do, when he chose to rise. A servant immediately obeyed his summons; and having accommodated him with a *robe de chambre*, desired to know whether he would like the refreshment of a bath. Osmond replying in the affirmative, was conducted to one lined with beautiful white marble, at the end of a gallery adjoining his chamber, and whence he was ushered to an elegant dressing-room, where he found habiliments of various kinds prepared for him—a very pleasing attention, as by this time his own were not such as he could have liked to appear in. On being drest, he was shewn

to a saloon, where the Marchesa awaited him to breakfast. She received him with a smile of true benevolence, and led him herself to the breakfast-table, which fronted a range of lofty lattices, descending to the ground, and commanding a view of the most beautiful scenery.

“ You must be content, Chevalier,” said she, as they took their seats, “ to breakfast alone with me ; for the Count finds himself too much affected by the recollections this place has revived, to be able to join us for the present.”

Osmond made a suitable reply to this speech ; and the Marchesa, previously, however, dismissing the attendants, proceeded to say—“ To tell you the truth, Chevalier, I am rather pleased than otherwise at his absence, being extremely anxious for the opportunity it has afforded me of having a little private conversation with you. Though still early,” she continued, smiling perhaps internally at the surprise which from the looks of Osmond

it was evident this declaration occasioned him, "we nevertheless have had a long conversation this morning, by which means I have ascertained your possessing an ascendancy over him, that convinces me you are the properest person that can be chosen for disclosing the joyful tidings in store for him."

Osmond started and clasped his hands. "Joyful tidings!" he repeated, in a tone and with a look that, had a doubt been entertained of the sincerity of his regard for the Count, would at once have dissipated it.

"Oh how delightful is it," resumed the Marchesa, perfectly appreciating his feelings on this occasion, and smiling with a tearful eye and ineffable sweetness on him, "when friendships take root in our early years, ingrafted on the ingenuous sensibility of youth; since friendships then contracted possess and retain to the last a tenderness and warmth seldom known in those that are formed in the riper periods of life,
of

of which the emotions excited by the remembrance of our ancient and youthful connections is a convincing proof! for what heart is there of the smallest feeling that does not melt away at the recollection of those; and no wonder the dissolution of them being perhaps the most painful trial to which we are exposed here below."

A deep sigh issued from her bosom as she uttered these last words—a sigh which evinced this observation the result of experience, not conjecture. After a short pause, she thus went on—"Yes, joyful tidings, I repeat, await my dear nephew, which you will readily allow, I believe, when informed that his juvenile friend, the Duke de Molina lives, and that his fair mistress, Lady Elizara, is still unmarried—the one as much his friend, and the other as inclined as ever to unite her destiny with his; of which, but for the precipitancy with which he was hurried from the kingdom, he would have heard ere this; as the very day after his rencontre with the Duke,
Lady

Lady Elizara arrived in Naples, having contrived, by means of a domestic whom she bribed to assist her, to effect her escape from the mansion whither Salvilina conveyed her from Acerenza, for the purpose of compelling her to become his bride; and as soon as her brother was in a state of convalescence, so fully justified the Count in his opinion, and convinced him, that only a mind black as Salvilina's could have cast an imputation on him, that all his friendship for and wish for an alliance with him revived; to prove which, as soon as he was able to travel, he set out for this castle, with his sister, trusting he should find the Count concealed within it. His disappointment at not meeting him was considerably aggravated by our not then knowing where the dear wanderer was. He determined on going himself in quest of him; but honoured me by entrusting Lady Elizara to my care. In the letter I wrote to the Count, to acquaint him with the death of
my

my dear Lord, and entreat his speedy return, I feared disclosing to him the happy termination of his troubles, lest the transports I well knew such a disclosure would excite should be too much, without a friend at hand to moderate them; for a frame and mind like his, enervated by sickness and long-suffering, I still see that too much caution cannot be used in acquainting him with the change in his prospects; and am therefore induced to entreat you to undertake the task, the weakened state of my own spirits at present, owing to various afflicting events, convincing me that I am totally inadequate to it myself."

Osmond bowed. "With delight, with pleasure, Madam," he said. "Oh what transport, to have the power of administering consolation to the afflicted mind; and still more to have the power of removing the grief that rendered that consolation necessary! How amply will my friend be now rewarded for his past sufferings;

ings ; and how truly does he whose generous heart prompts him to take so lively an interest in the fate of others, merit the recompence they'll receive."

"His nature is indeed truly noble," rejoined the Marchesa ; "and could he but acquire a little steadiness, he would be every thing his friends could wish ; as much their happiness as he is now their pride : but as long as he permits his feelings to triumph over his reason, he must continue a source of uneasiness to them."

"Hope every thing from the restoration of his happiness, my dear Madam," said Osmond. "A mind despairing of the accomplishment of its wishes, could scarcely be otherwise than unsettled."

"I hope much, but not every thing, from it," replied the Marchesa, with vivacity, "since I hope a great deal from you. Yes, my dear Chevalier, from the
high

high opinion my nephew entertains of you, and the influence you possess over him, I am persuaded you can do more towards rendering him the perfect creature nature designed him to be, than either time or the change in his affairs. I rely," she continued, "on your preventing any farther hostilities between him and the Marchese Salvilina, which I much fear he will feel an inclination to renew. When he discovers that the meditated attack upon the castle was intended for the purpose of rifling it of its richest treasure, its brightest ornament, Lady Elizara—"

"Heavens, is it possible?" exclaimed Osmond.

"The pirate, doubtless from a hope of being able by such a measure to avert, if not entirely, at least in some degree, from himself the punishment he has incurred, confessed all to my people.

"The Marchese, convinced that by stratagem he should never be able to wrest Lady Elizara from me, determined on having
ing

ing recourse to violence for the purpose. I am sorry to say this is a country in which a man can never be at a loss for ready instruments to execute any villainy he may plan. Speedily, therefore, he met with such desperadoes as he wanted; meaning, as soon as Lady Elizara was again in his power, to quit the kingdom for some time with her."

"Has your Ladyship yet come to any determination respecting the wretches that have been so fortunately thrown into your power?"

"You may be sure I think them deserving of exemplary punishment; but am so sensible it cannot be inflicted on them without publicity being given to an affair on many accounts it were better to have buried in oblivion, that I believe I shall let them escape it. To the obligations you have already conferred on me, Chevalier, you would add by condescending to take the subject into consideration, and becoming the arbiter of their fate yourself."

"With

“With pleasure, Madam,” replied Osmond; “my having heard your Ladyship’s sentiments will be a guide to me how to act.”

“The ship they captured is already released,” said the Marchesa, “and of course my nephew’s attendant Antonio.”

Osmond expressed great pleasure at this circumstance; fears of creating suspicion in the mind of the pirate, and thus of causing the overthrow of the plans he had been at such pains to arrange, having prevented his interfering about him.

After a little further conversation respecting the atrocities of Salvilina, Osmond inquired whether Lady Elizara was then in the castle?

“She is,” replied the Marchesa; “never having left it since her brother committed her to my protection, nor never will, I trust, till she has resigned her present name.”

“Her Ladyship knows, I presume, of the Count’s return?”

“Yes;

“ Yes; but is too well aware of the necessity there is for preparing him for an interview with her, to appear before him unexpectedly: and now, Chevalier, with your permission,” added the Marchesa, breakfast by this time being over, “ I will return to him, and endeavour to argue him into a proper state of mind for joining you, and hearing the delightful intelligence you have to communicate. In the mean while, if disinclined to take a ramble about the grounds, you’ll find in an adjoining apartment, books, musical instruments, and implements for writing, to amuse yourself with.”

“ In such a mansion as this,” respectfully bowing, “ I am convinced ’tis impossible any one can be at a loss for amusement;” rising as he spoke to open the door for her Ladyship.

CHAP. III.

“ Who can behold such beauty and be silent?
Desire first taught us words : Man, when created,
At first, alone, long wander'd up and down,
Forlorn and silent as his vassal beast ;
But when a heav'n-born maid, like you, appear'd,
Strange passion fill'd his eyes, and fir'd his heart,
Unloos'd his tongue ; and his first talk was love.”

OTWAY.

ON the Marchesa's withdrawing, Osmond quitted the saloon, impatient to take a nearer survey of the beautiful scenery it commanded.

Immediately before it stretched a gently-sweiling and extensive lawn, covered with a short, soft, thick grass of the finest verdure,

verdure, and diversified with detached groves of orange, lemon, almond, and myrtle, now all in full blossom, and by the richness of their scents giving new sweetness to the breath of morning. On either side it was bounded by a steep wilderness, whose hairy sides were with thickets overgrown, "grotesque and wild."

—— " And over-head up-grew,
Insuperable height of loftiest shade ;
Cedar, and pine, and fir, and branching palm—
A sylvan scene ; and as the ranks ascend,
Shade above shade, a woody theatre
Of stateliest view ; and higher than their tops,
A circling row
Of goodliest trees, loaden with golden fruit.
Blossoms and fruits at once of golden hue
Appear'd ; with gay enamelled colours mix'd,
On which the sun more glad impress'd his beams,
Than on fair evening cloud, or humid bow."

A spacious lake, ornamented with a beautiful island, and on whose transparent bosom the adjacent scenery was reflected,
terminated

terminated it; beyond which, an ample valley, exhibiting all the richness of cultivation, was seen winding amidst vine-clad hills, towards a range of majestic mountains—here, swelling on the sight, with dark-green forests and intermingled villages; and there, fading from it into the softest tints of azure.

Osmond's admiration of this sublime and beautiful scenery was enthusiastic. With eager curiosity, a bosom swelling with excess of pleasure, he frequently stopt and looked around him, as if fearful of passing too lightly over any part of it.

On reaching the flowery borders of the lake, he again paused, in order more leisurely to contemplate its various beauties. The bright sun-beams, refracted and expanded on its rippling waters, through which the snowy swan majestically sailed, had an enchanting effect; and many of the clustering trees of the island, owing to the spray occasioned by some intercepting

rocks on its margin, appeared, when the sun shone on them, as if hung with the richest gems.

Anxious to take a more critical survey of this delightful spot, Osmond stepped into a small boat he found moored close to the shore, and not far from a beautifully ornamented vessel at anchor; and, with the assistance of a boat-hook, had but little difficulty in steering himself to the island. On landing, he found himself amidst the most luxuriant and beautiful foliage, forming a succession of natural harbours to the centre of the island. On gaining this, his further progress was impeded by some craggy heights, bespread with wild thickets, and lost at each side in an apparent impenetrable mass of shade. On narrowly examining, he suddenly espied an arched chasm in one of the cliffs: he immediately approached it; and passing through, found himself, to his unutterable surprise, in a spacious cavern
or

or grotto, of the most romantic appearance.

Its roof was lofty, and composed entirely of rocks and minerals, which here and there descending to the ground, formed magnificent though irregular arches embossed with creeping vegetables, and tinted with the most beautiful colours. The apparently incessant moisture that trickled down the sides, had, in different parts, collected into rills, which fell from rock to rock with a murmuring noise, soothing and delightful to the ear, and which, as they broke the rays of light that crevices in the roof admitted, formed the most romantic vibrations and appearances, sufficiently almost to have warmed the imagination into a belief of being in the splendid palace of a fairy.

Osmond, wondering and admiring at every step, proceeded through a labyrinth of rocks to another opening, beyond which he beheld a spiral staircase. Impatient to see all the wonders of the place, he eagerly ascended this, and found himself, on gain-

ing the last step, before the entrance of a noble apartment, crowned with a lofty dome, embellished with the finest paintings, and supported by a double row of white marble pillars; the intervals between them alternately filled up with statues of the most exquisite workmanship, and couches covered with rose-coloured silk, surmounted with pedestals of bronze, and antique vases filled with the richest and most odoriferous flowers.

After taking a survey of this apartment, and its costly embellishments, Osmond advanced to view the scenery it commanded, and descending some steps shaded by a projecting pediment, resting, like the roof, on beautiful pillars, found himself on the brink of a steep rock, down which a noble sheet of water precipitated itself into a deep bed beneath, through which flowed a broad and transparent stream to the lake. At the foot of the fall, alternately lost and re-appearing amidst the white foam it occasioned, was a beautiful figure of Venus, represented in the act of wringing her wet tresses

tresses over her shoulder, as if about quitting the lucid element; and a little further on, but still so situated as, like the goddess on whose motions they appeared attending, to be continually lost to the view, was a group of three lovely nymphs, leaning on each other.

The scenery on either side was perfectly appropriate: high fences of wicker-work extended along the edge of the stream, interwoven with creeping shrubs; and beyond them were dispersed bowers of roses and myrtle, backed by shady groves, resounding with the melody of innumerable birds. Such an enchanting spot altogether Osmond had never seen; nor did he think it possible one could be found more calculated for the indulgence of that luxurious languor the climate of Italy gives rise to, the wanderings of the imagination, the reveries of fancy, the waking day-dreams, so delicious to taste and sensibility, than it was.

From the contemplation of its beauties,

D 2

he

he was suddenly diverted by a soft strain of music. He started, looked round him, listened attentively, and, on a repetition of the sound, conceiving it proceeded from the room, returned thither immediately, casting his eyes eagerly around in quest of the invisible musician, but without perceiving any other object than those which had previously met his view. Still, however, persuaded he was not mistaken, he examined the apartment more narrowly than he had before done, and at length discovered, behind one of the statues, a small door partly open, leading to another room of smaller dimensions, but still more tastefully furnished than the outer one; and at the furthest end of which, by an open lattice, and in such a direction as, without allowing her to see him, afforded him a perfect opportunity of seeing her, sat a young lady with a lute.

Scarcely had the eyes of Osmond fallen on her, than every sense became absorbed in admiration, so beautiful an object never before

before having met his enraptured gaze : yet it was not so much the gracefulness of her form, or the dazzling fairness of her skin, though so delicate, so clear, that the meandering of her blue veins was seen as through a transparent veil ; neither the soft glow of her complexion, though

“ The softest bloom that Nature spreads
Gave colour to her cheek ;

nor yet the dimple of that cheek, though such as painters give to Hebe ; or the radiance of her fine blue eyes, sparkling through their long silken lashes, that charmed him so much as the ineffable sweetness and animated expression of her countenance—a countenance to which the pale auburn hair that hung in wild profusion over her brow, and cast a softening shade upon her lovely cheek, gave an air of inexpressible innocence.

She seemed to be scarcely seventeen. Her dress was a robe of pale blue taffety, fastened at the breast by a clasp of pearls, and made so as to display to the greatest

D 3.

advan-

advantage the symmetry of her fine person. Altogether she was one of those kind of beings that quickly awaken the feelings which rouse the passions into play.

Although her style of beauty did not at all resemble that of the Italian, still Osmond, from not having heard of the Marchesa having any female relative or other visitor at present with her than Lady Elizara de Molina, took it for granted that it was Lady Elizara whom he now saw, and under that persuasion could not forbear involuntarily exclaiming to himself, as he gazed upon the lovely creature—"Happy Placentia! happiest of the happy, in having such a being destined to thy arms! 'Tis well, 'tis fortunate I know thy enviable lot, else might my heart have yielded to her attractions. Have yielded!"—A shake of the head, and deep sigh, finished the sentence.

In the dangerous pleasure of gazing on her, and listening to her delightful strains, Osmond was not long indulged. In the course

course of a few minutes she laid aside her lute, quitted her seat, and, ere Osmond could get to any sufficient distance from the door at which he had been watching her, to prevent a suspicion of having been so employed, she made her appearance in the outer room.

She started back on beholding him, and for a minute remained motionless; then, again advancing, bowed slightly, in return to the profound obeisance he made her, as she glided past him, and descended to the grotto beneath.

Diffidence prevented Osmond from attempting to follow her steps, as, till properly introduced, he conceived it would be indecorous for him to attempt addressing her; but though he had not thought so, still would the agitation, the confusion, he felt at having been surprised by her in such a manner have withheld him at the moment from making an effort for the purpose.

Chancing to cast his eyes towards the
D 4 portico,

portico, he beheld her crossing a bridge thrown over a narrow part of the lake, which now appeared so conspicuous an object, he was much surprised he had not before noticed it. As soon as the thick shades on the opposite shore had hid her from his view, the spell which fascinated him to the spot being broken, and the surprise, nay perhaps uneasiness, his longer absence from the palace might occasion, occurring to his recollection, he repaired to the grotto ; and being convinced, from the direction she had taken, that there must be an outlet from it to the water, examined narrowly, and at length succeeded in discovering a small door, opening to the left bank. Along this he pursued his way to the bridge ; but what words can paint the astonishment he experienced, when, on reaching the spot where he had seen it, neither bridge nor vestige of a bridge were visible !

“ Good heavens ! ” he involuntarily exclaimed, as for a minute he became trans-
fixed

fixed through surprise, "is all I have seen then an illusion of the senses?"

With hasty steps he measured his way back, impatient to have the mystery explained. He found the boat where he had left it; and leaping into it, succeeded in a few minutes in gaining the opposite shore.

He found the Marchesa in the saloon, evidently awaiting his return with impatience.

"My dear Chevalier," she cried, eagerly advancing to meet him, the moment he made his appearance, "your friend is expecting you in his study."

Bowing—"I will do myself the honour of immediately attending him," he replied.

A servant was summoned to shew him the way. He found the Count seated with his back to the door, and apparently in a deep reverie. Dismissing the servant, he softly approached, and laid his hand upon his shoulder. The Count, without starting or evincing any emotion whatever, looked

up, and on perceiving who it was—"Ha!" in accents of the greatest calmness, "my dear Munro, is that you? Your looks," attentively regarding the deeply-glowing cheek of Osmond, "give me pleasure, as they impart to me the gratifying assurance of your health having sustained no injury from the perils and fatigues you have recently undergone."

"No, thank Heaven, none whatever," returned Osmond.

"You have been taking a ramble, I understand," rejoined the Count.

"Yes, an enchanting one. I wish you had accompanied me in it, as I think the freshness of the morning air and the beauty of the prospects could not have failed of reviving your spirits."

"My dear friend," gravely replied the Count, motioning for him to take a seat beside him, "I have been much better employed; which I am persuaded you will concur with me in thinking, when I inform you that the principal part of the morn-
ing

ing has been spent by me in endeavouring to collect my too long scattered ideas, and laying down rules for the regulation of my future conduct. I confess I was cruelly agitated on my arrival here; but considering this is my first visit to the castle since the death of my dear and ever-to-be lamented uncle, that is not a circumstance to be wondered at. No sooner, however, did I a little recover from the emotions thus excited in my mind, than I resolved to set about the task I so faithfully promised you to undertake, namely, that of trying to conquer my passions. I really am ashamed of having been so long the sport of every gale that blew. I now see clearly that without steadiness a man can never hope to support the dignity of his nature, or possess a chance of tranquillity. Instead, therefore, of any longer beholding me like the flexile osier, trembling and agitated on every occasion, expect, in future, to see me like the firm rock, over

which the tempests rave and billows roar, without making any impression on it."

"Nay, I hope not," returned Osmond, with forced gravity, but an inward smile, too well acquainted with the disposition of the Count, not to be almost convinced that his present resolution would occasion no greater alteration in him than the many others of a similar nature he had formed; "since the man who cannot be moved by the occurrences of this life, is even more to be pitied than he who suffers himself to be too greatly affected by them—his want of sensibility keeping him a stranger to a thousand delicious sensations."

"Better remain unacquainted with these than enjoy them at the expence of dignity and ease."

"Let reason only have dominion over sensibility; and believe me, my dear friend," resumed Osmond, with solemn earnestness, "so far from degrading, it will ennoble our character, and render still more exquisite our pleasures."

“ Well, when once I have got my feelings in complete subjection, I may perhaps yield to it; but not till then—not till I am thoroughly convinced I can command myself. But the period in which I shall be enabled to do this is not, I trust, very far distant. Indeed, I almost feel as if it were already arrived. Yes, I cannot help persuading myself that I have already, by dint of argument, acquired that philosophic coolness which prevents a man being disturbed by any circumstance. At all events, I am thoroughly convinced that there are no emotions, however violent, which I should not be able to conceal.

“ I see you are doubtful of this,” perceiving Osmond smile—“ O would to Heaven,” starting from his chair, and clasping his hands together, “ something was this instant to occur, to give me an opportunity of proving to you that you are too incredulous.”

“ What !” demanded Osmond, also rising, conceiving he could not have a better opening

opening than the one thus afforded him for breaking the intelligence he had to communicate, "do you think you could avoid appearing moved, if you heard that your friend the Duke de Molina was not mortally wounded by you?"

"I should certainly," returned the Count, but with an air of the greatest *nonchalance*; "be pleased at the information, but neither transported out of myself, nor yet extremely surprised at it; consequently could, without any difficulty, retain my composure."

"Not surprised at such intelligence!" repeated Osmond involuntarily, and in accents demonstrative of his being greatly so himself by the assertion.

"No; for 'tis such as for some time past I have thought it very likely I should yet receive."

"What! after telling me the Duke dropt lifeless at your feet!"

"Fainting, my dear friend—fainting, I only meant," said the Count coolly.

"Good.

“ Good heavens !” exclaimed Osmond, with irrepressible emotion—then a little more calmly, “ And did you never take any pains to ascertain his fate ?”

“ My dear creature,” cried the Count, “ I was so occupied in pursuit of his sister, that I had neither time nor opportunity.”

“ Well,” resumed Osmond, eager to communicate the joyful tidings with which he was charged, and also convinced, from what the Count had said on the subject, no farther preparation relative to the Duke de Molina was necessary, “ you were not mistaken in your surmises of yet having pleasing intelligence concerning your noble friend. He lives—lives to renew his intimacy with you.”

“ And pray, my dear friend,” asked the Count, but without any alteration in his looks, or the accent in which he had just before spoken, “ how came you by this intelligence ?”

“ The Marchesa was my author,” replied the astonished Osmond—astonished at the
seeming

seeming apathy with which the Count received information, which, notwithstanding his being in some degree prepared for it, would he feared have overpowered him with joy.

“Strange that she should not have imparted it to me,” somewhat thoughtfully, resumed the Count.

“She feared being unable to support the sight of the emotions she imagined it would cause you.”

“Ah, what a convincing proof of her knowing nothing of the revolution that has taken place in my disposition !”

A revolution, indeed, Osmond now began to fear, and of a most unpleasant nature; else he could not possibly, he thought, have heard of the safety of the man for whom he professed so great a regard, the brother too of the woman he adored, with the indifference he had done. In a word, he began to think, from the manner in which he now conducted himself, that owing to the great fatigue of mind and
body.

body he had lately gone through, he was beginning to fall into a lethargic state; and under this idea, determined to be very brief with regard to Lady Elizara, conceiving, if any thing could rouse him from such a dangerous one, it would be the tidings he had to communicate respecting her.

Accordingly—"Well, my dear Count," he proceeded, "doubtless nothing is now wanting to complete your happiness, but an assurance of Lady Elizara's being still unmarried."

"It certainly would contribute towards it," replied the Count, but with the most perfect calmness, "since I think it impossible she could ever enjoy felicity with such a man as Salvilina."

"And is it only on that account you would be pleased to hear she was not his bride?"

"Why, not altogether," quietly seating himself in the chair he had just before vacated; "but while I acknowledge this, permit

mit me also to say, that to hear she was free this moment would not occasion the slightest alteration in my manner; for never again will I, I am resolved, suffer myself to be affected as I have heretofore been by joy or woe. Henceforward I am determined to meet with the same fortitude, the same composure, whatever may befall me."

"You may determine, but, pardon me for adding, I doubt much your being able to do so. Yes, notwithstanding your boasted philosophy, I cannot help thinking that you could not hear of Lady Elizabeth being at this very moment under the roof with you, and not only at liberty, but inclined to crown without delay your fondest wishes, without being at least a little agitated."

"No, no, not in the smallest degree, I assure you, my dear friend," leaning back in his chair, and jogging one foot over the other, with an air of the greatest indifference.

"What!"

“What! not if you were positively assured she was in the castle—assured that in another moment you might have her in your arms; that beloved, that faithful, that divine girl, (speaking a little more feelingly on the subject than perhaps he would have done but for the incident in the grotto) whom you have so long doated on, and despaired of ever possessing?”

“No, no,” shaking his head; “and now, my dear friend, I trust you will no longer doubt my having obtained that command over my feelings I wished for.”

“Indeed, my dear Count, I cannot believe it possible you could receive such intelligence unmoved—could hear that your Elizara was actually at this moment in the castle of Acerenza without emotion.”

“Ah!” with some little change of voice and countenance, “I wish it was in any one’s power to assure me she was.”

“It

“It is in mine,” exclaimed Osmond.

The Count started. “Don’t trifle with me,” he cried.

“Heavens! could you think it possible I would trifle with you on such a subject? Upon my honour, my soul,” with a degree of vehemence he had never before spoken with, observing the Count still regarding him with a doubtful look, “I am serious. She is—your Elizara is at this instant in the castle; and long ere this I make no doubt expected to have seen you at her feet.”

The Count heard no more. He started from his seat, with a precipitancy that caused him to upset both the celestial and terrestrial globe, and catching Osmond in his arms, rapturously embraced him, as if he had mistaken him for the fair Elizara herself. Then starting away a few paces, he exclaimed—

“Oh my soul’s joy!

If after every tempest comes such calm,

May

May the winds blow till they have waken'd death ;
And let the lab'ring bark climb hills of seas
Olympus high, and duck again as low
As hell's from heaven. If it were now to die,
'Twere now to be most happy ; for I fear
My soul has her content so absolute,
That not another comfort like to this
Succeeds in unknown fate."

And with these words he flew out of the room, leaving Osmond not a little diverted at his expence. On the subsiding of his involuntary mirth—"What a proof," thought he, "does the poor Count furnish of the difficulty which attends the conquest of any long-indulged error or propensity, and also of the little knowledge we in general have of ourselves. In vaunting of his strength of mind and steadiness, under the firm persuasion of his possessing both, he but followed the example of many of his fellow-beings ; for how few of us are there who thoroughly know ourselves till put to the test. When no storm threatens—when no billows roar—when neither
dazzling

dazzling sunshine, nor yet appalling gloom, appears—when all around us is smooth and tranquil—how frequently do we boast of our firmness, and think ourselves equal to any exertion! But if the prospects alter—if proofs of this boasted firmness are required—how often do we shrink back, and disappoint every expectation we had raised! With what indulgence, what candour, should not the consideration of this induce us to view the weaknesses and errors of our fellow-creatures! The very best among us should regard these with lenity, since even such cannot, except tried, assure themselves that they might not fall into similar ones. 'Tis only such as have preserved their fortitude unshaken through all the changes of this life, whose principles, like the rock in the midst of the tumultuous billows of the deep, have remained firm in the midst of temptations, that have a right to animadvert with severity on the failings and frailties of others. These, however, are the
very

very last who would do so ; since ever in proportion to the rectitude of the heart, is the commiseration with which it views the errors of others."

These reflections were followed by others, on the happiness the Count was in the enjoyment of at the moment, and must look forward to, in a union with so angelic a creature as Elizara ; and again the involuntarily sighing heart of Osmond pronounced him the happiest of the happy."

His reflections were at length interrupted by the entrance of the Marchesa. She approached him with a joyful countenance, and extending her hand, which he respectfully took and raised to his lips—" My dear Chevalier," she said, " accept my thanks for the manner in which you have acquitted yourself of the task I enjoined you. The Count bears his unexpected good fortune with infinitely more composure than I could have expected he would, but doubtless owing to the manner you prepared him for it. Language is inadequate

quate to express the obligations I consider myself under to you for the services you have rendered him and me: my actions will, I trust, more forcibly speak my sense of them."

"I must intreat your Ladyship," cried Osmond, a blush of modesty suffusing his cheek, "not to touch again on such a subject. If you knew the pain it gives me, I feel assured you would not."

"You shall be obliged; but the less I say the more I shall think. I have left your friend at the feet of his lovely mistress, and have already dispatched a courier to Naples, to apprise the Duke de Molina of the return of our dear truant, and to request his immediate presence here."

Osmond, supposing some time would elapse ere the Count would desire his company, conceived he could not have a better opportunity than the present for bringing matters to a conclusion relative to the pirate and his crew. Accordingly, having previously inquired of the Marchesa whether

ther she had any objection to his now doing so, or her sentiments respecting these culprits had undergone any change since her former conversation about them, he rang, on her replying in the negative, for them to be brought before him.

They were conducted into his presence by some of the principal domestics of the castle; and as they entered at one door, the Marchesa, unwilling to be a spectator of the scene, retired at another.

Osmond did not inform them of her determination, until he had expatiated for some time, and with much severity, on the offence they had meditated committing, and the fatal consequences that must inevitably have resulted to them from the perpetration of it; nor then, without assuring them, if any circumstance hereafter occurred to prove that the mercy her Ladyship extended to them failed of touching their hearts with repentance, and making them amend their lives, the punishment they now escaped would to a certainty fall

upon them. They appeared contrite, and promised amendment; and having restored the articles they had extorted from him and the Count, were dismissed, and in a few minutes after, literally turned from the walls of Acerenza.

Scarcely did Osmond find himself again alone, ere, contrary to his expectations, the Count, with all that breathless eagerness which ever marked his air and manner, when any thing interesting to him had occurred, burst into the room, for the purpose of conducting him to Lady Elizara.

“ She is impatient—she is all impatience,” he exclaimed, grasping, as he spoke, the arm of Osmond, “ to behold my friend, my deliverer, my more than all, than either—the preserver of her adored self.”

Osmond made an effort to draw back, in order to obtain an opportunity of informing him that he had already seen Lady Elizara; lest otherwise, if he first received the
information

information of his having done so from her, he might make inquiries of an embarrassing nature.

Regardless of this effort, however, the Count hurried him on to the apartment where Lady Elizara expected them, and to which, by this time, the Marchesa had returned.

Osmond entered it with a secret tremor, but the cause of which he either could not or, did not like to surmise. But how quickly did it vanish, when, on casting his eyes on Lady Elizara, he beheld in her, although a very lovely girl, a very different beauty from the one he had seen in the grotto. Surprise (perhaps the sensation he experienced at the moment deserved another appellation) rivetted him for a minute to the floor; then, recollecting himself, he suffered the impatient and impetuous Count to lead him forward.

Lady Elizara rose on his approach, and with a smile of gratitude and ineffable sweetness, extending her hand to him,

begged his acceptance of her warmest acknowledgments for the obligations he had conferred upon her, and (her speaking eye glancing at the moment, but as if involuntarily, upon the Count) her friends.

Osmond, bowing respectfully upon her fair hand, assured her that she rated too highly the services alluded to; yet at the same time that the hour which had given to him the happiness of rendering such, would ever be hallowed in his remembrance.

“Oh! my Elizara,” cried the enraptured Count, placing himself beside her, and gently circling her waist with his arm, on her resuming her seat, “my heart seems as if it would burst with the fulness of its joy. Nothing—nothing but the presence of your brother, and the performance of the ceremony that secures you mine, is now wanting to render me the happiest being under the canopy of heaven. That over, and,” suddenly starting up, “I will let loose the dogs of war, and with wings as swift as meditation,

meditation, or the thoughts of love, sweep to my revenge. Yes, the perfidious Salvilina shall then experience my vengeance—shall then know that a spirit like mine is not to be insulted or wronged with impunity.”

The Marchesa and Lady Elizara both looked alarmed at this declaration. The latter, however, better concealing her fears than the former—“ I am glad I know your determination in time, Count,” cried she, with a laughing air; “ for as I have no desire to play the part of a widowed bride, I am resolved, except you faithfully promise not to do any thing likely to endanger your safety till I have told you I am tired of you, which Heaven knows may be much sooner than you are aware of, not to change my present state.”

“ You are right, perfectly right, Lady Elizara, in forming such a resolution,” said the Marchesa; “ and I will uphold you in it with all my heart.”

“ Assuredly,” cried Osmond, “ every one

must concur with your Ladyship in thinking so."

"What!" most impatiently demanded the Count, "agree in thinking that I deserve to have my happiness retarded, except I give up my revenge!"

"My dear Count," proceeded Osmond, rising, and laying his hand on his arm, "believe me, as one of our most sublime poets has said—

"Revenge, tho' sweet at first,
Bitter ere long, back on itself recoils."

"But to let such a villain escape unpunished!" thoughtfully rejoined the Count.

"He will not—be assured he will not, my dear Count," cried Osmond, with energy; "the goadings of his own conscience will not suffer him to do so."

"But when the wrongs I have received at his hand are known, what will the world say to my forbearance?"

"That

“That by practising such, you evinced a noble mind; since it certainly requires a much less effort to resent than forgive our injuries.”

“You must indeed, my dear nephew,” said the Marchesa, also leaving her chair, and approaching him, “pass over the conduct of Salvilina in silence, if you wish to make me any amends for all I have lately suffered on your account.”

“Yes, and instantly make a promise to that effect,” added Lady Elizara, with an air of the most playful gaiety, and a bewitching smile, “or I immediately retract the concessions I have made in your favour.”

The Count cast a half-smiling, half-reproachful look at her at these words: then, after a little further hesitation—“Well, I am conquered,” cried he; “I submit: who can resist the pleadings of those they love?”

A desultory and agreeable conversation of some length followed this amicable ad-

justment relative to Salvilina ; after which the party broke up to dress for dinner.

Impatient to relate the incident of the grotto, Osmond attended the Count to his dressing-room, for the purpose of revealing it to him.

The Count listened to him with the most profound attention. On his concluding—“ So very handsome, say you ? ” cried he. “ I really,” with thoughtfulness, “ cannot surmise who she is ; but probably some visitor of my aunt’s, who, finding how she was engaged this morning, repaired to the island, in order to avoid being any restraint upon her.”

“ Should it prove so, then,” said Osmond eagerly, and with a flushing cheek, “ we are likely to see her at dinner.”

“ Certainly ; but should we not, depend upon it your curiosity respecting her shall not long remain ungratified, as I shall take care to inquire of my aunt about her. As to the bridge, which gave you such astonishment,

nishment, it is the ingenious contrivance of the Marchesa; and turning on a pivot, can, with the greatest ease imaginable, be thrown from the island, across the lake, to which, by touching a spring, it immediately flies back to its shelter, amidst tufts of low trees and bushes, that completely hide it from casual observation. By being able to set it aside in this manner, the appearance of the island is rendered still more romantic, and an opportunity afforded of sailing entirely round it."

"It does honour to her Ladyship's taste and ingenuity," observed Osmond, "and renders still more delightful the charming spot we have been speaking of, by giving an air of enchantment to it."

As soon as Osmond had finished dressing, he repaired to the chamber of the Count, who immediately attended him thence to the saloon, where, besides the Marchesa and her lovely young friend, they found a large party assembled, in

honour of his Lordship's arrival, of which early intimation that day had been given throughout the neighbourhood.

To these friends, as soon as they had paid their congratulatory compliments, Osmond was introduced, in a manner that ensured him the most gracious reception.

There were several pretty women present; and in the course of a few minutes, the Count found an opportunity of inquiring of Osmond by a glance, whether his fair incognito was amongst the number of these? to which inquiry the other replied by a significant shake of the head.

To all the refinements of modern luxury, such as Osmond had witnessed in the mansion of Lord O'Sinister, was here united a degree of princely magnificence, which heightened the effect these refinements were calculated to have upon the senses.

But neither produced such an effect upon the mind of Osmond as the winning manners

manners of his noble hostess, and the not less conciliating deportment of the other members of her family.

The Marchesa Morati, although at this period somewhat advanced in the autumn of her days, still retained vestiges of superior beauty; but though she had not possessed a trace of this, still would she have been a fascinating object, from the softness and urbanity of her manners, the dignity of her air, the elegance of her movements, the wish she on every occasion manifested to promote the happiness of others, and the sense and spirit which marked her conversation, and proclaimed her understanding and accomplishments of the first rate. At this juncture, she was rendered still more interesting by the pensive cast which grief for her beloved lord had given to her features, and which evidently proved that the cheerfulness she at present displayed was not the result of inclination, but assumed for the purpose

of rendering still more perfect the felicity of her nephew and his fair mistress.

To the playful vivacity and amiable ingenuousness of youth, the latter added all those winning graces that spring from culture and refinement. Her beauty, of the true Italian kind, was highly attractive; her person was tall, and strikingly elegant; her face a fine oval; her complexion dark, but clear, and made to appear still more delicate by the contrasting darkness of her luxuriant hair; her eyes were black, large, sparkling, and so expressive, that language was scarcely necessary to explain her meaning. In a word, she was altogether so bewitching an object, as fully to justify, in the opinion of Osmond, the adoration with which the Count regarded her.

Not inferior to the admiration and esteem with which he regarded her and her noble friend, was that which they experienced for him. The fine openness of his countenance, its candour and sweetness,
the

the easy elegance of his figure, the unstudied gracefulness of his manner, the persuasive eloquence with which he delivered his sentiments, the pleasingly-modulated tones of his voice—all excited an immediate prepossession in their minds in his favour, such as would have insured to him their notice and attentions, even though he had not been introduced to them as he was, under the character of a preserver.

During dinner, the conversation was general, and of the most animated description; but even if it had been less so, Osmond would still have found sufficient in the costly embellishments of the banquetting-room, and the varied and extensive prospect its long range of lofty lattices, now all thrown open to admit the air, commanded, to have amused and engaged his attention.

Immediately before them extended a spacious and delicious flower-garden, with several beautiful fountains adorned with figures.

figures of the finest marble, and cooling and embalming the air with their silvery waters; and further on a vast tract of country, finely diversified, and enlivened with flocks and herds, and scattered cottages, half shrouded by the luxuriance of the foliage, amidst which they reared their humble heads, and which here and there admitted partial views of the sea, reflecting all the glittering glories of the sun; the whole bounded by aspiring mountains, gradually receding and fading into the mist of distance.

After dinner the company became scattered, every one amusing themselves according to their respective inclinations. Some sat down to cards in the saloon; and others, in detached parties, dispersed themselves over the gardens, which, as evening advanced, were splendidly illuminated, and furnished with music and refreshments.

Osmond, in the course of the evening, found an opportunity of detaching the
Count

Count for a few minutes from the rest of the party.

“Well, my dear Count,” he anxiously cried, on drawing him aside, “well (looking at him with an air of impatience), have you inquired——”

“About the fair stranger—yes, but to no purpose. Both my aunt and Lady Elizabeth plead ignorance concerning her. I am, therefore, inclined to believe her, from this circumstance, neither more nor less than a pretty little *femme de chambre* belonging to the castle.”

“No, no,” hastily exclaimed Osmond, “’tis impossible. Her look, her air, her dress, her appearance altogether, permit me not to harbour a doubt of her being of superior rank.”

“Strange! then who can she be?” returned the Count, with a musing air. Then, after a pause of a minute—“I shall inquire in another quarter to-morrow, and flatter myself with being more successful.”

Osmond was highly pleased with this assurance.

assurance. "And yet why should I be so anxious to discover her?" he cried to himself; "why stimulate enquiries that can obtain for me nothing but an idle gratification? since, whether she be married or unmarried, titled or untitled, portioned or portionless, I am equally interdicted by my situation from thinking of her."

Still, however, notwithstanding this reflection, he could not help continuing to wish to learn who she was.

His impatience to gratify the curiosity awakened in his mind by the description he had received of the scenes surrounding the abode of which he had so unexpectedly become an inmate, was too great, and the impression made by recent occurrences still too lively, to permit of his remaining long in an inactive state.

At an early hour the next morning, he forsook his couch; and finding, on quitting his chamber, that the family were not yet up, sallied forth.

Involuntarily, perhaps, he bent his steps
towards

towards the grove which the preceding day had hid the lovely stranger from his view; and through its verdant mazes was pursuing his way to the island, when, chancing to cast his eyes around him, he beheld her reading upon a moss-covered bank, overshadowed with flowering umbrage.



CHAP. IV.

“ As I listen'd to her,
The happy hours pass'd by us unperceiv'd ;
So was my soul fix'd to the soft enchantment.”
Rowe.

OSMOND instantly became motionless, but quickly recovered the power of motion, on catching the eyes of the beautiful stranger.

“ I greatly fear, Madam,” he involuntarily exclaimed, on seeing her start up on beholding him, and look as if inclined to fly, “ that I have been so unfortunate as to alarm you.”

“ No, Sir,” bowing to his salutation,
but

but not without a little hesitation, as if somewhat flurried, and a deepening blush upon her lovely cheek, over which her fair hair lightly fluttered, “ ’twas the suddenness with which you appeared that made me appear as if you had done so.”

“ For having been the occasion of any disturbance to you, permit me, Madam,” cried Osmond, in the most respectful accent, his dark and eloquently-expressive eyes beaming with admiration, “ to entreat your forgiveness.”

“ You have it, Sir. They must have a strange temper indeed, who could not readily pardon what was not intentional.”

“ My intrusion was certainly not intentional; but—but—truth obliges me to declare”—and as he spoke he stole a glance, half timid, half expressive of the feelings she had inspired him with, at her, “ that on my entering the grove, had I known it concealed you, I could not have forborne seeking the spot.”

“ You

"You are polite, Sir," carelessly adjusting a veil of gauze she had on, and quitting the arbour.

"Nay," in an alarmed accent, terrified at the idea of his having offended her by what he had just said, "let me not, I conjure you, Madam, be the means of driving you hence."

"You are not, Sir; I was thinking of going just as you appeared."

The heart of Osmond throbbed with hope. She was probably then returning home; and even if she did not permit him to attach himself to her side, still at a distance, he reflected, he could watch her steps, and thus by obtaining a knowledge of her residence, readily learn, he conceived, her name and situation.

But to his inexpressible disappointment, on evincing an intention of pursuing the same path she had taken, she suddenly stopt, and turning towards him, entreated him not to attempt following her.

Osmond,

Osmond, utterly disconcerted by this request, since, besides the pleasing expectations it obliged him to give up, he knew not whether or not to attribute it to an idea of his being presumptuous, remained for a moment silent and motionless.

“To oblige you, Madam,” he then said, “I know of no mortification to which I would not submit. Rest assured, therefore, your wishes shall be obeyed.” But a little recovering from the confusion into which she had thrown him—“As some little recompence for my ready acquiescence to them, will you suffer me to ask whether, at some future and not very remote period, I may not indulge a hope of again seeing you—whether the woods of Acerenza are alone honoured with your visits—its palace not sometimes graced by your presence?”

The fair stranger bowed. “I do not look forward to the happiness of being seen there,” she replied; “and ——”

What

What further she meant to say was here prevented by the voice of a man suddenly calling upon her from an adjacent thicket, by the name of Cordelia.

She started, changed colour, looked at once alarmed and confused; and as she hurried forward, motioned Osmond by her hand to the forbearance she had previously enjoined him.

Accordingly, with his eyes he only pursued her, the modesty and sensibility of his nature being too great to permit him to do any thing that could make him appear intrusive, or occasion pain to another.

Yet never had he found any impulse so difficult to resist as that which had urged him to trace her flying steps. The impression which her beauty had previously made upon him was this day strengthened by the harmony of her accents, the sweetness and complacency of her manners. But if her voice dwelt upon his ear, so also did

did the unwelcome one which had so suddenly, so roughly, and evidently so unexpectedly, called her away: and equal to his wish to learn who she was, was the one he experienced, to know what relationship or connection subsisted between her and the person from whom it proceeded.

At length, starting from the reverie into which she had plunged him, he returned to the spot where he had surprised her; and throwing himself upon the turf she had pressed, resigned himself for some minutes to the inward contemplation of her charms, during which he more than once repeated her name—the name of Cordelia, which, to his ear at least, had music in it. Then, in order to try and give a turn to his thoughts, the indulgence of which he was convinced could not fail of entailing pain upon him, he took out his pocket-book and pencil, and committed to paper the ideas suggested by a very fanciful dream of the preceding night, in
which

which the fair stranger was represented as a sovereign princess, driven from her possession in a neighbouring state by a cruel usurpation, which, after going through unheard of dangers, he had the good fortune to overthrow, and was rewarded for his services with her hand. The following was his

ADDRESS TO FANCY.

Fancy, aerial goddess, why
With phantoms tempt my view;
With joys that mock me as they fly,
That fade as I pursue?

Let not thy fascinating art
My senses still enchain;
Nor feed the flame within my heart,
That riots in each vein.

At least with Reason share the sway,
Infringe not on her right;
Permit her government by day,
And yours shall be the night.

My

My waking dreams, ah let her guide,

(For what is life but those?)

Over the visions you preside,

My sleeping ones compose.

Exhibit then thy magic wand,

Conduct me through its charms ;

Elysian fields, the fairies land,

Or to—Cordelia's arms.

With melody enchant mine ears,

The seraph's song of praise,

The music of the moving spheres,

In fair Cordelia's lays.

Lead where the fays and fairies dance,

By moonlight on the green ;

Or where Diana holds her court,

Amid the sylvan scene.

Let vivid flowers bedeck the ground

With variegated blooms ;

And sportive zephyrs waft around

Their exquisite perfumes.

Reveal the Muse's coy retreat,
 (So difficultly won)
Point out their wild sequester'd seat,
 On sacred Helicon.

With raptures of poetic fire
 My bosom now inflame ;
Pure flowing from Apollo's lyre,
 Or Aganippe's stream.

With thy creative power call,
 The regions of delight,
'The gods' abodes ; and open all
 Their glories to my sight.

The pleasures of the blest above,
 Teach me entranc'd to feel ;
Ethereal joys, celestial love,
 O'er all my senses steal.

Enchantress, if to sleep you give
 Such extasy of bliss ;
It is to die, and not to live,
 When I awake from this.

The encreasing heat at length reminding Osmond of the lateness of the hour, he returned to the castle; and finding the family were already assembled at breakfast, hastened to the saloon, where, besides those he expected to see, he found several of the guests of the preceding day.

As soon as breakfast was over, a significant glance from Osmond induced the Count to conduct him to his study, where, as soon as they entered, Osmond recounted the incident of the morning.

When he had ceased speaking—"The person of whom I meant to inquire concerning your mysterious divinity," cried the Count, "is a young man of the name of Mactalla, a domestic in the castle, and the son of an Irishman, who served during the late monarchy as a soldier in the Irish brigades in France, and who, in that situation, having had an opportunity of rendering a signal service to my uncle, the Marchese Morati, who, disliking a life of total
F 2 indolence,

indolence, also served in one of these for some time, had his discharge obtained, and was brought to Acerenza, where he continued till his death, leaving his son, who was also his companion hither, to the protection of his generous patrons. The young man has proved himself fully deserving of their kindness; and beside being faithful, sincere, and affectionate, is shrewd, smart, and lively, in a word, every way qualified to make discoveries of the nature you are now anxious for; and therefore I resolved, from my conviction of this, to apply to him on the subject, when I found I could obtain no satisfaction from the Marchesa or Lady Elizabethara."

"I presume, Count," said Osmond, smiling a little archly, "he has given you unquestionable proofs of his cleverness in the way you allude to."

"O no, no, upon my honour," returned the Count; "for you know, my dear creature, I was always in love."

"And

“And therefore did I advance such a supposition.”

“But I mean,” returned the Count, a little confusedly, “with only one object.”

Osmond again smiled, perhaps a little incredulously; and the Count rang for Mr. Mactalla, who, in a few minutes, made his appearance, and presented to the view of Osmond the figure of a tall slight young man, about four or five-and-twenty, and with a countenance replete with vivacity, good nature, and good humour.

The Count, at the request of Osmond, entered into no very minute particulars respecting the fair stranger; but merely said his curiosity had been excited by the appearance of such a person near the castle, and that he much wished if he (Mactalla) did not already know who she was, he would endeavour to discover.

Mactalla, after musing for some minutes — “I have it,” cried he, suddenly striking his hand on his forehead, “I have it, by the Powers,” in accents of delight, and

filliping his fingers; "I can guess who she is—yes, yes, 'tis plain enough."

"Indeed! Pray who is she then?" demanded the Count, somewhat impatiently.

"Why your Lordship can't have forgot your surly neighbour, Signor Trapanti."

"No, the unsocial being. But what of him? what has he to say to the young lady in question?"

"She is his niece, I am persuaded."

"His niece!" echoed the Count.

"Yes, I am certain she is. Thinking his servants did not pay him proper attention, and beside that they took advantage of his frequent illnesses to plunder him, he lately fetched from Naples the destitute orphan daughter of a brother of his, for the purpose of nursing him, and having an eye to matters when he is not able himself; and finding her attentions to him and his concerns not only pleasing but serviceable, is unwilling to let her quit the house for a minute, except in his company, lest she should meet with something
that

that might induce her to leave him entirely. Spite of all his watchings, however, she sometimes contrives to make her escape into these grounds, but always with fear and trembling, as more than once her steps have been traced by him."

"And prithee where didst thou pick up all this intelligence?"

"From very good authority, please your Lordship—from a young damsel belonging to his family."

"And amongst the other things she told thee, did she mention the name of the young lady?"

"No, Signor, no; but described her as a very angel."

"Yes, yes, it must be her," cried the Count, in an inward voice. Then again addressing Mactalla—"Let horses be got ready for the Chevalier and me immediately, and do you hold yourself in readiness to attend us. I am resolved on beating up the quarters of Signor Trapanti

this morning, if for no other purpose for that of plaguing him for his sins."

The moment Mactalla withdrew to execute the orders of the Count, Osmond, who till then had pretended to be employed in looking over the books, hastily approached the Count—"And pray who is this Signor Trapanti?" eagerly burst from his lips.

"An old superannuated rake, who, having no longer power to follow his vicious propensities, has turned misanthrope, and now rails at what he formerly pursued. His domain adjoins this, and his fortune is extremely large, and every year encreasing, as he is now as miserly as he was formerly profuse, insomuch that for some time past he has declined mixing in society."

"Should he suspect the motive of the visit you are about paying him, may he not," said Osmond, in a hesitating accent, "be tempted to confine more strictly his
lovely

lovely niece, and thus render still more unhappy her situation?"

"We must manage matters in such a way as to prevent his having a suspicion of the kind. While you entertain the niece, I'll contrive to keep him employed."

"Ah, my dear Count," rejoined Osmond with a sigh, "why should I attempt to pursue an object I can never hope to possess? My situation totally precludes my entertaining one of the kind. Would it not, therefore, be better for me not to—"

"Stuff! stuff!" impatiently interrupted the Count; "I will not suffer you to proceed in such a strain. On going this morning to Signor Trapanti's I am positively determined, and equally determined that you shall accompany me: not another word, therefore, on the subject."

CHAP. V.

“ But I must rouse myself, and give a stop
To all those ills by headlong passion caus’d ;
In minds resolv’d, weak love is put to flight,
And only conquers when we dare not fight ;
But we indulge our harms, and while he gains
An entrance, please ourselves unto our pains.”

DRYDEN.

WE are easily persuaded to do what we like. Osmond, therefore, having satisfied his scruples by the effort he had made to excuse himself from going whither his heart had already travelled (for that the fair stranger was the niece of Signor Trappanti, he had not a doubt, from what Mac-talla had said), allowed himself to be overpersuaded by the impetuosity of the Count ;
and

and the horses being announced at the moment, they directly mounted, and set forward, attended by Mactalla.

Their ride was through delightful groves, along the banks of purling streams, so bespread with flowers, that it seemed as if Flora herself had just been wandering along them. "A verd'rous wall" hid the dwelling of Signor Trapanti from casual observation. On penetrating this, Osmond beheld a spacious structure, but which, from the alterations suspicion and spleen had caused the owner to make in it, infinitely more resembled the baronial residence of a chief of old, than the light and airy structures of the Italians.

As Osmond's eyes wandered over the gloomy abode, he involuntarily but silently exclaimed to himself—"Fit dwelling, indeed, for misanthropy; but ah, how unfit a one for youth, for beauty, for sensibility!"

"I apprize you in time," said the Count, while Mactalla was knocking at the gate,

“that we are likely to be refused admission here; but having once commenced the siege, I am resolved on no account to raise it, without bringing the governor to comply with my wishes.”

“Surely if once denied admission, you don’t mean to persevere in demanding it?”

“Indeed but I do. Patience and perseverance are not quite such great strangers to me as you may imagine.”

An old withered porter, nearly with age grown double, but still with something facetious in his countenance, answered Mactalla’s summons; and on learning the occasion of it, positively declared his master was from home.

“Come hither, Sir,” said the Count, beckoning to him. On his obeying—“Can you look me in the face,” he added, “and repeat that assertion?”

“Yes, upon my veracity, my Lord, can I,” bowing profoundly low; “the Signor and my young lady his niece went early
this

this morning to Signor Thomaso's, the lawyer in Acerenza, on business of great moment."

"Signor Thomaso! ah, I know him well—as great a rogue as the profession was ever blessed with. I once employed him in a law-suit; he took fees on both sides, and cheated me most horridly. I'll follow your master to his house, and if I don't find him there, or that he has been there, woe be to you, old Cerberus."

Osmond, apprehensive that their pursuing Signor Trapanti might be the means of involving the lovely niece in some unpleasant predicament, earnestly endeavoured, as soon as they had turned their backs on his mansion, to dissuade the Count from such a measure, but to no purpose; he persisted in riding on towards Acerenza, but was prevented entering it, by meeting the carriage of Signor Trapanti some little distance from it, into which, on discovering whose it was, the eyes of Osmond instantly darted; but instead of beholding the face that had charmed

charmed him, he beheld in that of the young lady who occupied a seat in it, one he had never before seen.

"Upon my honour, my dear fellow," cried the Count, on learning his disappointment, "I am almost inclined to believe that it is an ideal being you have been speaking of all this time."

"I wish you could make me think so."

"Well, well, we'll endeavour to prove whether 'tis so or not. Mactalla shall immediately be set to work."

"No, no," cried Osmond, but so faintly, that the Count plainly saw his opposition to the measure was but affected. "At all events," added he, "don't, I conjure you, mention the affair to the Marchesa or Lady Elizara; for I should be very unwilling to appear ridiculous in their eyes."

"O rely on my secrecy; but at the same time permit me to observe, that your admiration of one beautiful woman could never make you appear ridiculous in the eyes of another."

This

This day, as on the preceding one, a splendid party dined at the castle, and in the evening there was a grand display of fire-works on the lake; after which music and dancing filled up the principal part of the night.

The Count had earnestly entreated that his nuptials might immediately take place; but a conviction of the impropriety of such a measure, and the likelihood there was of its giving offence to the Duke de Molina, made the Marchesa, and of course Lady Elizara, deaf to all his solicitations on the subject.

To fill up the interval of expectation in such a manner as should somewhat beguile it of its tediousness to him, the Marchesa contrived a constant succession of amusements at the castle. For an instant, these never rendered Osmond forgetful of the fair and mysterious stranger. In defiance of prudence, and the arguments of reason, he still continued to dwell on her idea, and haunt the spots where he thought

3 there

there was the greatest probability of meeting her, but to no purpose. Day after day wore away without seeing her again; nor was Mactalla, as he learnt from the Count, more successful in his researches after her.

At length the Duke de Molina arrived, and the morning after his lovely sister and her amiable lover were united in the chapel of the castle, and in the presence of a number of distinguished friends and relatives. From the chapel they returned in procession to the grand saloon, where a numerous assemblage waited to offer their congratulations, and participate in the festivities of the day. Nothing could exceed the splendor and gaiety displayed on this occasion.

Ere the congratulations which this joyful event gave rise to were well over, the Marchesa drew Osmond aside, and insisted, in order, she said, to keep alive the remembrance of it in his mind, and of course his wishes for the continuance of the happiness it occasioned, on his acceptance.

tance of a ring of considerable value, and a cabinet filled with precious antiques; after which the Count, with a positive threat of demolishing both, if not instantly taken by him, presented him with a gold box, enriched with diamonds, and containing his picture, and a highly ornamented and valuable watch and chain.

Osmond felt almost overpowered by the generosity and kindness of these noble friends; he thought they rated too highly their obligations to him: but at the same time, their having done so, by still further convincing him of the nobleness of their natures, heightened his regard and esteem for them.

Towards the decline of this joyful day, either owing to the languor over-fatigued spirits is apt to create, or to the pleasure he derived from sometimes having an uninterrupted opportunity of indulging his reflections, Osmond gradually detached himself from the gay and brilliant crowd
that

that filled the palace and gardens of Accrenza, and wandered away to an undulating valley, shrouded by thick aspiring woods, and refreshed by a clear and wildly-devious stream. The delightful contrast which its tranquillity formed to the noise and bustle he had just left—no sound meeting the ear save the faint rustling of the trees, and the warbling of the birds that thronged them, together with the magnificence of the scene, tinted as it was with the crimson blush of evening, the warm glow which the setting sun pours over creation—awakened a soothing, a luxurious pleasure in the mind of Osmond—that serene delight, that ineffable feeling of benevolence, “the parent of disinterested good will to others,” which the view of smiling nature never fails of exciting in a heart of sensibility.

“Of him who could unmoved behold such a scene as this,” cried Osmond, his eyes delightedly roving over it, “with justice

justice it might be said—he's fit for treasons, stratagems, and spoils; let no such man be trusted."

As he pursued his walk and his reflections together, his attention was suddenly caught by a beautiful green mount, majestically rising above the surrounding shades, and crowned with an open temple of white marble, covered with a dome of the same, supported by light pillars. Osmond, concluding from the elevation of this building it must command an enchanting prospect, eagerly ascended to it; but scarcely had he reached it, ere every sense became absorbed in surprise and admiration, at beholding on the opposite side, a few paces below it, seated like a mountain nymph upon a tufted sod, her shining tresses merely prevented from streaming in the light breeze that blew around her by a chaplet of wild flowers, her robe white and fluttering, and warm on her cheek the sultry season glowing, the lovely stranger.

He

He might perhaps have continued hours rivetted to the spot, had not the accidental turning of her head discovered him to her, and thus broke the spell that bound him.

On perceiving her rise hastily, as if with an intention of retreating, he darted forward, and throwing himself before her—"Oh do not," he cried, in accents at once supplicating and impassioned, unable to resist the impulse of his feelings, "do not let me be the means of still frightening you away. If you knew how restlessly, how ardently I have sought for such a minute as the present, you would not, I flatter myself, think of shortening it."

He paused, in eager expectation of a reply. In vain, however, he looked for one. She spoke not, neither did she attempt to move; yet that something she wished to say, was evident from the expression of her countenance.

"Oh say," resumed the impetuous youth, agitated by this silence beyond the power
of

of controlling his emotions, "how am I to interpret this silence? Am I to ——"

A loud hollo from the other side of the temple prevented his finishing this speech, and put the fair stranger to flight. He pursued her, perhaps involuntarily, and not without a wrathful invective against the person, whoever he was, that had driven her away; but ere he had got many yards in the tangled path into which she had darted, his cloaths got entangled in a bush of prickly shrubs, which his impetuosity made him overlook and stumble amongst; and before he could extricate himself, the person whose voice had occasioned all this confusion made his appearance, and presented to the view of Osmond the features of one of the guests of Acerenza—an elderly gentleman of the name of Belermo, who set up for a great physiognomist; and in order to make his talent known, and thus obtain for himself some little distinction, such as he was conscious, without making an effort for the purpose, he

he should vainly hope for, tormented every one with his observations. The high estimation in which he found Osmond was held at the palace of Acerenza, induced him to believe, if he could impress him with an opinion of his cleverness, he should reap some advantage from the circumstance; he therefore attached himself to him as much as possible throughout the day; and for the purpose of following up his plan respecting him, traced his steps.

“ Ah, my dear young friend,” he exclaimed, “ how much does your having stolen away from the madding crowd within, convince me that you are the young philosopher your countenance led me to believe !”

“ Philosopher, Sir !” repeated Osmond, perhaps a little sternly, doubtful at first whether he was not laughing at him; but on looking earnestly in his face perceiving that he really was not—“ upon my word, Sir, you confer a title on me to which I make no pretensions.”

“ And

“And therefore do you merit it. Yes, your unassuming manners, your abstracted air, the indifference in which, to judge from your looks, you hold the pomps and vanities of this world—all confirm your right to the title; a title which any one who is at all a physiognomist will at the first glance bestow upon you; but never yet indeed was I mistaken in the judgments I formed from the countenance; never yet ——”

“Some other time, Sir,” cried Osmond, but not without a difficultly-suppressed laugh at this curious original, “some other time,” tearing away, as he spoke, his coat from the briars, “I shall be happy to attend you, but at present I have an engagement elsewhere.”

“Nay, if it be to meditate on the beauties of nature, permit me to accompany you.”

“You do me honour, Sir, by the request,” returned Osmond, no longer able to smother his laughter; “but”—then not knowing

knowing what to say, he stopt abruptly, and kissing his hand to him, vanished in a moment from his view.

In vain, however, he hurried down the path the fair stranger had taken—in vain explored every neighbouring bush and thicket—she was no where to be seen, neither any habitation to which she could have retreated; and at length he reluctantly ceased his pursuit of her for the present.

The idea that he should in all probability have discovered where she lived, and so have been enabled to learn who she was, but for the intrusion of Signor Belermo, so irritated him, that had he encountered him again at the moment, he would probably have given him some reason to retract his assertion of his being a philosopher.

But as reflection resumed its empire over him, all his anger was turned against himself. With confusion and remorse he thought of his conduct; his having dared,
situated

situated as he was, to breathe a sentiment of tenderness, or evince a wish to inspire one.

Osmond was not of a disposition wilfully to indulge in what he conceived wrong. From this hour, therefore, he resolved on no more seeking the fair stranger, and on doing every thing in his power to detach his thoughts from her. The resolution was painful, but a conviction of the consequences of not attending to it being much more so, determined him on adhering to it.

The next morning, after breakfast, as he was sitting alone and rather pensively in his chamber, a gentle tap came to the door, and on his desiring the person to enter, Mactalla made his appearance.

“Do I intrude, Signor,” cried he, bowing.

Osmond nodded, and Mactalla, shutting the door, then approached him.

“I have news for you, Signor,” exclaimed

ed he in a joyful accent, "I have news for you."

Osmond started—"News!" repeated he, instantly concluding it was something relative to the fair stranger he had to communicate. Then recollecting his resolution of the preceding night—"Have you?" said he, in a more composed accent, and resuming his seat.

"Yes, and that I have by the Powers. You must know, Signor, that yesterday, in searching after a pet dog of my Lady Marchesa's, in a remote and lonely part of the castle, long disused by the family, I chanced to discover her favourite waiting-woman in conversation with a young lady of great beauty, and who so strongly resembled the description given by my Lord the Count of the lady he set me upon making inquiries after, that I instantly resolved on questioning Madam Beatrice closely about her. Accordingly I lay in wait till she quitted the gallery in which I had surprised her;
and

and then, by dint of cross questionings and coaxing, drew from her that the young lady in question was a Miss Raymond, the daughter of an English gentleman of fortune, but who, owing to an unfortunate affair of honour, had been under the necessity of quitting his own country, bringing with him his family, consisting of her and her mother; and who, having some reason to imagine that his steps were traced, had turned out of the straight road to Naples, for the purpose of taking refuge for a time in this castle, with the late owner of which, my Lord Marchese, he was formerly well acquainted, and of whose death he was ignorant at the time he formed this resolution. Within half a league of this he stopt, and dispatched a letter hither by a confidential servant, which the Marchesa opened, and finding it came from a person who had enjoyed the friendship of her Lord, she directly hastened to assure him in person of the asylum he required under her roof. Accordingly, in the dead of the

G 2

night,

night, he and his family were introduced into the castle, and immediately put in possession of apartments not likely to subject them to intrusion, and two of her household, on whose prudence and secrecy she particularly relied, appointed to wait on them. She and Lady Elizara spent much time in their company till the arrival of the Count, since which they have rarely been with them, lest their being so should expose them to his knowledge, and thus be the means of having them betrayed to that of others."

"What, by the Count!" interrupted Osmond, with something like indignant astonishment; "suspect him capable of an act of such baseness?"

"No, Signor, no. They have no idea he would do so in any other way than by yielding to an over anxiety to render them happy."

"Ah, now I understand you," said Osmond.

"Since the Marchesa and Lady Elizara
have

have ceased being much with them, the young lady has had recourse to books and stolen rambles for amusement ; for her father is either so severe, or else so apprehensive, as they have before been on the Continent, of her being seen by some one who may know her, that with his good will, he'd immure her like a nun. This, Signor, is the whole of what I had to **communicate**, and which of course will not travel farther."

Osmond sighed, and remained silent and thoughtful for a few minutes. Then raising his eyes to Mactalla—" I thank you, **my friend**," he cried, " for the pains you have taken to oblige me ; for I perceive you are perfectly aware that it was to please me the Count stimulated you to the inquiries you have done. I conceive, however, that my curiosity was of an idle nature ; and therefore beg you may give yourself no further trouble on my account. Of the necessity of silence relative to what you have told me, be assured I am too well

aware for you to be under any apprehension of my dropping a hint on the subject."

When left again to his own reflections—"Is she then unhappy?" Osmond mentally exclaimed. "Oh that I had the power of affording to her father the refuge he requires, of stepping between him and danger. Vain wish! let me not indulge in such! Let me rather wish to obtain what is possible—a conquest over the feelings that now agitate me."

He had now been an inmate of the castle of Acerenza upwards of a month, and could no longer think of deferring his return to his native country. Accordingly, he instructed a servant to make inquiries for a vessel bound to England. The Marchesa and her nephew being apprised of this, no longer delayed acquainting him with the wishes they had formed for his continuance with them. To silence their painful solicitations on this head, Osmond was at length

length induced to confess the motives that urged him to return home. This confession, however, so far from having the desired effect, rendered them if possible still more importunate with him to remain where he then was; and as an inducement to him to do so, entreated him to invite, in their united names, his family to come over immediately, and take up their residence at a pleasant and commodious house at no great distance from the castle, and appertaining to its domain.

But no arguments, no entreaties, could obtain from Osmond his acquiescence to this measure. He knew the sentiments of his family too well, not to be convinced that they would consider themselves degraded by accepting an asylum from strangers, and that what they considered as a degradation they would never voluntarily submit to: and as to himself, his pride, his principles, revolted from the idea of his being a dependant, of sinking in supineness the talents with which Hea-

ven had endowed him—No; in place of doing this, he resolved, by the active exertion of these, of the abilities he was master of, to make a vigorous effort for that independance which is the aim, the ambition of every generous spirit to possess, and thus at all events to have the felicity of thinking he deserved it.

This resolution, together with the sentiments in which it originated, he candidly confessed to his noble friends. The Marchesa ceased her importunities the moment he had done so; and the Count also continued silent and thoughtful for some minutes after; then suddenly starting up, and shaking off the cloudy aspect he had assumed on Osmond's positive refusal to continue at the castle—"Well, my friend," cried he, "suppose it were possible in this country to procure you the independance you merit, would you then have any objection to remaining in it, and thus affording us a chance of sometimes enjoying the happiness of your society?"

Osmond

Osmond paused—he deliberated—he felt convinced that the Count would never have asked such a question, if not possessed of the power of serving him in Italy. He reflected on the great uncertainty there was of his obtaining a settlement, at least such a one as he wished for, for some time in England; as though, in order to prevent his spirits from sinking into utter despondence, he had endeavoured to buoy himself up with hopes of Lord O'Sinister's exerting himself to serve him, still he had never for an instant forgot how positively his Lordship had declared to him that he should not be able to do this essentially, if at all, for a considerable period; and that Delacour's friends might not be inclined to exert their interest for any but their own immediate connexions. The result of these reflections, therefore, was his entreating the Count to have the goodness to explain himself, candidly acknowledging that the first road to honourable

independance that opened to his view he would joyfully embrace.

“This is what I purpose,” replied the Count. “The Duke D’Amalfi, a near relation of mine, and now at the head of affairs in Naples, has repeatedly assured me that nothing could possibly confer greater happiness on him than an opportunity of obliging me. I shall, therefore, if you permit, write immediately to recommend you to his patronage.”

Osmond accepted this proposal with joy and gratitude. Accordingly a courier was immediately dispatched by the Count with a letter to his noble relative concerning him.

To this an answer, not merely favourable but also highly flattering, was received at the expected time; and the day after, Osmond began to make preparations for his departure from Acerenza. Too well aware of the injury he was doing to his future prospects, by wasting the present hours

hours in idleness—of the welfare of his future days depending in all probability on the manner in which he employed the present time, to suffer himself to be prevailed on by the Count to defer it longer than was absolutely necessary.

The Marchesa now made a proposal to him that was truly agreeable, namely, as the attendance of a valet could not be dispensed with by him, to take Mactalla into his service, who, notwithstanding his sincere attachment to her family, wished to extend his rambles beyond her domain; and had besides conceived such a partiality for him, he having been the servant appointed to wait on him, that he felt solicitous to continue in that situation.

This matter being arranged to the satisfaction of all parties, Osmond next availed himself of an opportunity that just at this juncture occurred of writing to England. His letter was long and explanatory. After entreating no time might be lost in writ-

ing to the different places where there was a chance of Delacour's touching on his return to Europe, he expressed his hopes of his parents having no objection to joining him as soon as possible in Italy, where every thing that filial love and duty could dictate for their happiness should be done by him.

The Count, as the most likely method he thought he could have recourse to for the purpose, endeavoured to induce him to protract his stay at Acerenza, by assuring him he was positive, if he prolonged it, they should yet be able to discover who the fair stranger was. Osmond, however, remained inexorable to his entreaties; but at the same time promised not only to visit him speedily but often, should he have it in his power.

At an early hour one morning, ere yet the mists and exhalations of early day had disappeared, Osmond, having previously the preceding night taken a most affectionate

tionate leave of his noble and generous friends, quitted their hospitable mansion on horseback, which mode of travelling would better than any other, he conceived, enable him to gratify his curiosity with regard to the scenery he should travel through; and attended, besides his valet Mactalla, by a little French boy, the son of a deceased servant of the Marchesa's, for the purpose of guiding a sumpter mule, the road between the castle and Naples being extremely bare of accommodation for travellers.

The Count gave him an introductory letter to the Duke D'Amalfi, and tried to force a pecuniary obligation on him; but to no purpose—the manner in which he meant to prosecute his journey, united to the circumstance of his having received his purse back again from the pirate undiminished in its contents, making Osmond conceive it absolutely unnecessary for him to incur one of the kind.

The Count, however, differing in opinion from him, and finding it impossible
to

to prevail on him to do what he wished, privately dispatched a messenger with a letter to the Duke D'Amalfi, two days preceding his departure, in which, after expatiating on the too scrupulous delicacy of Osmond with regard to pecuniary matters, he entreated his Excellency to have the goodness to appropriate the sum of twelve hundred pounds, for which he enclosed him an order on his banker in Naples, to the use of Osmond, in such a way as should induce him to believe it was the produce of whatever situation he might be appointed to.

With a heavy heart Osmond quitted the castle of Acerenza. Next to his own immediate connexions, there were none for whom he entertained so high a regard as the amiable family he had parted from. He would indeed have considered himself ungrateful in the extreme, if he had not felt the parting with such friends, after the innumerable proofs of esteem and affection he had received from them.

Gradually,

Gradually, however, in all probability, the sadness of his spirits would have yielded to the pleasing hopes he entertained of enjoying, and that at no very distant period, perhaps, again their society, but for the despair he felt of ever more beholding Miss Raymond, whose idea, an involuntary retrospect at the moment he was quitting it, of the hours he had passed at the castle, had awakened in his mind.

As much as possible, however, he strove to banish the feelings this idea gave birth to; and at length the numerous objects of grandeur and beauty that, as the dawn brightened, swelled on his sight, began to second the efforts he made for the purpose.

The sun was just beginning to gild its stately towers, when he paused to indulge himself with another and a last view of the castle of Acerenza. As he gazed upon its green groves and forests, gently agitated by the breath of morning, and resounding with the warblings of innumerable birds—
“Delightful shades!” he involuntarily and
5 mentally

mentally exclaimed, his heart swelling with gratitude and tenderness at the recollections they revived, “ ever may you continue as now, the bowers of innocence and peace—ever may the illustrious owners of the noble pile you shadow—that mansion where the houseless child of want sues not in vain for admission—where the stranger finds a ready refuge—ever may they continue in possession of the happiness they so eminently merit.”

Then with a lingering adieu to all the beloved and enchanting haunts in which he had passed so many delightful hours, he rode on. For some time nothing could be more agreeable than his journey—the road, for a considerable way after leaving the castle, gently sloping and winding amongst cliffs covered with aromatic plants and flowers, and tufted with the most beautiful and fragrant shrubs, the exquisite sweetness of which was diffused around by a light breeze that swept over the cliffs; but as the sun ascended in the horizon, this

this by degrees dying away, the heat became-intense, and the swarming insects that buzzed around troublesome in the extreme.

After a long endurance of both, Osmond and his companions at length alighted, and turning their horses to feed, sought refuge themselves amidst the embowering shades, that almost in every direction met the view; and here Osmond could not but admire the provident care of nature, who, as if aware of the necessity there was for shelter in such a climate, had, with a profuse hand, scattered trees and shrubs around, the thickly interwoven foliage of which denied admission to the sunbeams that had brought them to perfection, like to favourites, as Shakespeare beautifully says,

“ Made proud by princes, that advance their pride
Against the power that bred it.”

Osmond

Osmond having taken possession of a delightfully situated arbour, composed of orange, spiry myrtle, and lemon, surmounted by tufts of almond-trees, with a beautiful grove in the rear, and a fine meadow in front, still moist and verdant, notwithstanding the vertical sun that darted on it, in consequence of a fine clear rivulet that meandered through the soil to a distant pile of rocks, down which it fell, checking and preventing the sweets of the surrounding blossoms from being too potent, a basket of provisions was unpacked for his breakfast.

Completely screened in his embowered retreat from the sun, he enjoyed the contemplation of the effect it produced around. Flocks and herds were seen in every direction languidly ruminating in the shade; and shepherds stretched beneath the expansive boughs of chesnut-trees, enjoying their leafy covert with a degree of luxurious indulgence peculiar to the

the Italians, and for which they are remarked for enjoying the serenity and genial warmth of their climate.

As soon as they had breakfasted, Mactalla and the French boy lay down to repose ; but the mind of Osmond was too busily employed in reviewing the past and anticipating the future, to permit him to follow their example. Absorbed in reflection, he literally took no note of time, till the awaking of Mactalla, when, looking at his watch, he found the sultry hours of noon were over, and that if they wished to get in at an early hour to the place where they were to rest for the night, and which, from the lonesomeness of the roads, he understood it was essential to their safety to do, they had no further time to lose.

Accordingly, he quickly remounted, and soon after found himself in a road bounded on one side by a river, and on the other by apparently impenetrable woods ; on the opposite side of the river, and extending along it, rose stupendous mountains,
many

many of them covered from the base to the summit, with awful forests of pine and larch, and others interspersed and rendered rugged with rocks and precipices, in many places projecting far, and glooming upon, the water beneath.

The sun by this time sinking in the west, threw a warm glow over this wild tract, a crimson tint upon its rocks and jutting cliffs, that heightened its sublimity; to which the richly coloured clouds that lightly floated over it, transiently veiling the bright azure of the heavens, added not a little. Altogether it was a scene calculated to awaken the enthusiasm of a devotee of Nature's; and by degrees the feelings it inspired Osmond with, so completely absorbed him, as to interrupt the conversation which he had from time to time carried on in the course of the day with his attendant Mactalla, whom he found at once intelligent and entertaining, and well acquainted with the road they were travelling.

But

But soon the attention of Osmond became entirely engrossed by a village at the foot of the mountains, and characterized by an air of the most chilling desolation. Nothing animate was visible either in or about it, and up to the very doors of the houses the paths were choaked with weeds and grass.

“ Ah Signor,” cried Mactalla, gently riding up to him, on perceiving the earnestness with which he regarded this dreary spot, “ I see you are surprised by the stillness and loneliness of that place,” pointing across the water with his whip.

“ I am indeed,” replied Osmond ; “ pray to what may that stillness and loneliness be owing?”

“ Faith, Signor, to a very sufficient cause—to its having no inhabitants.”

“ No inhabitants !” in accents of surprise, repeated his master.

“ That I know of,” rejoined Mactalla, “ except it be a stray sheep or a goat from the mountains.”

“ It

“ It appears to be a beautiful spot,” said Osmond, elevating his eyes from its neat cottages, many of them mantled over with roses and honeysuckles, literally destined to waste their sweetness on the desert air, and detached from one another by clumps of shadowing trees to the thickly-wooded heights that towered sublimely above it.

“ And was once well peopled. Ah many and many is the merry hour I have passed in it.”

“ Indeed !” And pray to what circumstance is its present desertion owing ?”

CHAP. VI.

“ Deep night, dark night, the silent of the night,
The time of night when Troy was set on fire ;
The time when screech-owls cry and ban dogs howl ;
When spirits walk, and ghosts break up their graves ;
That time best fits the work we have in hand.”

SHAKESPEARE.

MACTALLA shrugged his shoulders—
“ Ah Signor, to a melancholy one. Do
you perceive that tomb of black marble,”
—again pointing with his whip across the
river, “ with cypresses overhanging it, and
a greyish and pointed cliff rising like a py-
ramid above it ?”

“ I do,” answered Osmond.

“ Well, Signor, that tomb, in the course
of

of one day, received all the inhabitants of Tessino."

"Heavens! what a mortality must have prevailed amongst them!" exclaimed Osmond.

"A mortality! Ah Signor, but I'll tell you all about it, if you have no objection to a melancholy story."

"Not the least, if you have none to tell one."

"Oh not the smallest; merry or sad 'tis all one to me. I used to keep the Marchesa's people alive and merry with my stories."

"What! your dismal ones?" asked Osmond, half smiling.

"Yes, Signor; for a dismal one always led to a merry one: when I had lowered their spirits, the least I could do was to raise them again. I had always something pleasant to tell them of my own country, little Ireland; how the lads at the patterns there, after drinking lovingly together for hours, would sally forth to bang one another

ther for nothing at all but the honour of the thing, and that of their different countries; and then, after amusing themselves at this sport for half an hour or so, return quietly to their booths, as good friends as ever with one another."

"I see you have not forgotten your native country," cried Osmond.

"No, Signor; my poor father was too fond of talking of it, to let me do so—but to the story I promised to tell you. About two years ago, the Marchesa Morati, and her husband the late Marchese, went to pay a visit to a friend residing among the most distant of the mountains on the opposite shore. Returning from this to their castle, they got benighted and bewildered amongst those tremendous ones, immediately in the neighbourhood of Tessino. Whilst endeavouring to regain their road, they fancied they heard dreadful shrieks mingling with the cold blast that blew around them—and the next morning proved they were not mistaken; for the

first news they heard on rising was, that all the inhabitants of Tessino had been murdered the preceding night; and doubtless both they and their attendants would also have been dispatched, had they then been discovered in its neighbourhood, which, seeing that all the party were not perhaps too well prepared for a journey to the other world, might not have proved a very agreeable circumstance to the feelings of some of them."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Osmond, with horror in his look and accent, "to what was so dreadful a catastrophe owing?"

"You shall hear, Signor. A lad of the name of Felisco, a native of Tessino, the son of a shepherd, and one himself, was employed by a wealthy farmer, residing amongst those mountains, to keep sheep for him. At no great distance from the place where his flock fed, was rather a well frequented road; and opportunities thus afforded Felisco of witnessing the depredations and savage acts of cruelty committed

mitted on travellers by a desperate gang of robbers, who found shelter in a forest hard by. At first he was terribly frightened whenever any of them came in his way, which was often the case; but at length, finding they never attempted to injure or molest him in any manner, he by degrees came to think no more of them than if they had been so many of the innocent sheep he tended; and at length suffered them to scrape a kind of acquaintance with him, but remained deaf to all the arguments they used, the Captain in particular—for Felisco was a stout active lad, and the rogue knew therefore would be an acquisition to his troop—to try and prevail on him to forsake his mean and tiresome employment of keeping sheep, as they chose to call it, and put himself in the way of obtaining fame and riches by joining them.

“It happened one morning that he and his master went to a neighbouring town to sell some sheep. A man, who had

come thither to purchase provisions, was, in consequence of his suspicious appearance, taken up and exposed to view in the market-place, and a large reward offered to any one who could prove whether or not he belonged to a troop of banditti in the neighbourhood, by whom the son of a man of considerable consequence and fortune had been lately murdered. Amongst the rest, Felisco took a peep at the stranger; and notwithstanding his being disguised, instantly recognized in him his acquaintance, the captain of the robbers.

“Doubtful how to act, he immediately took his master aside, and imparted the discovery to him, who, being a little more knowing than he was, hesitated not to take advantage of it, by directly going to a magistrate to identify the stranger, and thus secure the reward promised to the person who did so.

“That Felisco, however, had the best right to this was well known, which the magistrate at length learning, he insisted
on

on its being divided with him; and afterwards employed him as a guide to the troops that were sent out in quest of the rest of the banditti. With their grand retreat, however, Felisco was unacquainted; but notwithstanding, several of them were taken through his means, and together with their leader, executed: after which the magistrate, fearful that it would not be safe for him to remain in his old neighbourhood, sent him privately, and under his special protection, from it.

“ The result proved his apprehensions well founded. The survivors of the gang, after long searching for him, for the purpose, as one of them afterwards confessed, of revenging themselves on him, for the loss of so many brave comrades, came to the horrid resolution of destroying all his friends and relations in Tessino—a resolution which they carried into effect, descending from their hiding-places in the mountains to the village, at the dead hour of midnight, when all the poor

inhabitants were buried in repose after the fatigues of the day. Blessed St. Benedict! what horrid sights did it present the next morning! But I'll not shock you, Signor, by dwelling on these. Suffice it to say, the remains of the poor massacred inhabitants were all quietly laid in one grave, and ever since the village of Tessino has been truly a deserted one. They say the houses are soon to be pulled down, and a monastery erected on their scite, by way of an asylum for travellers benighted amongst the desolate mountains in this quarter, and where daily prayers are to be offered up for the souls of those who so miserably perished. Considering the grandeur and loneliness of the situation, I don't think, Signor, a better could be fixed on for a religious edifice."

To the justness of this observation Osmond assented by a slight inclination of his head: and now the sun disappearing from the horizon, the wavering woods, and rocks, and mountain tops, that long retained

retained the ascending gloom, were beginning to be involved in the gloom of night—a gloom rendered more impressive by the terrific grandeur or rather wildness of the surrounding scenery; and a rising wind, that now howled dismally through the clefts of the mountains, now swept in hollow gusts over the tall forests that hung upon their sides.

“I am much mistaken,” cried Mactalla, after a short interval of silence, “if a storm be not coming on. The clouds looked threatening as the sun disappeared; and see, Signor, how vainly the moon strives to make her appearance. I hope we may reach the place where we are to put up for the night before it begins; for it won’t be the most agreeable thing in the world to be overtaken by one here. Ah, commend me to the roads of little Ireland, where, if a person be surprised by a storm, they have always a snug inn at hand to thrust their heads into. Fine landscapes are fine things, but in my mind there’s nothing so plea-

sant to a weary traveller as a cosy little parlour, with plenty of provisions."

"Did you ever hear more of the innocent occasion of the dreadful catastrophe you have been relating to me?" asked Osmond, still too much occupied in reflecting on it, to attend to the observations he was making.

"No, Signor, though I have frequently inquired for him. We were very intimate; indeed I may say a kind of friendship subsisted between us. Some people blame him for what he did: for my part I say nothing—only that I think he had better not have made himself so busy; for as shaking water that has a foul bottom only renders it muddy, so disturbing such folks only renders them more mischievous."

"Nay, my friend, 'tis a duty we owe to society to bring wickedness to punishment whenever we have the power. He that would neglect to avail himself of an opportunity to do so, would justly be considered

sidered in the light of an accessory to the crimes of those he thus suffered to escape."

"I stand corrected, Signor," returned Mactalla, in accents of submission.

Osmond now inquired whether they were still far distant from the hamlet where they purposed resting for the night?

"As it is now too dark for me to see about me," replied Mactalla, "if I knew how many miles we had come, I could resolve that question. Pray, Signor, is it possible to calculate distance by time?"

"Certainly," answered his master.

"May it please you then, Signor, to make up the number of miles you think we have come, from three o'clock this morning down to the present hour, which I take to be about ten, from the time that has elapsed since we heard a vesper bell."

"We had much better push on than waste time in trying to calculate how far we have come; for I now perfectly agree with you in thinking that a storm is at hand."

They accordingly pushed forward, but, to their great vexation, were almost every five minutes obliged to slacken their speed, owing to the little French boy, who in vain tried to make his mule keep up with their horses, perpetually exclaiming, under the terrifying apprehension of being left behind, "*Au voleur ! au voleur ! au voleur !*" an exclamation that, notwithstanding Mactalla's solicitations to the contrary, Osmond could not avoid attending to.

"Long threatening comes at last," cried Mactalla, on feeling some heavy drops of rain fall upon his face, accompanied by vivid flashes of lightning and tremendous bursts of thunder.

"We must get on as fast as we can," said Osmond; "for I am pretty well convinced this storm will not soon be over."

"Ah, you were right, Signor, to say as fast as we can, which by the Powers won't be very fast; for this beast (alluding to the mule, which, for some time past, he had been stationed by, in order to try and
get

get it forward) is to the full as stubborn, I'll be sworn, as any of her generation ever were. By the Lord, I might just as well beat one of the trees as beat her."

"Well, my friend," cried Osmond, "we must only have the greater patience."

In a short time the storm became so violent, that it was utterly impossible for them to proceed. They accordingly alighted, and leading their affrighted horses, sought shelter from its violence at the entrance of a wood that skirted the road.

"By St. Benedict," cried Mactalla, as they slowly made their way into it, and the blue lightning quivered round their heads, "one might almost be tempted to think the end of the world at hand; for such fire and brimstone as this was never, I believe, seen or smelt before: but courage, courage," he continued, on their arriving beneath the foliage of some tall and interwoven trees, matted together in wild luxuriance; "let me tell you, Signor, both

man and beast might be worse off than here."

The shelter they had obtained was, however, but partial. The rain fell in torrents, and was frequently blown in their faces by sudden squalls of wind, and which also bowed, with frightful violence, the trees around them; the tumultuous heavings of which, as agitated by the wind, now resembled the roaring and breaking of waves upon a rocky coast—now the doleful shrieking of unquiet spirits.

"I should not much like to be alone in this dismal place," said Mactalla, getting closer to his master, "for I have heard that ghosts, like witches, ride upon the wind; though to be sure none but such as had very bad quarters at home would venture out such a night as this."

"And why not? seeing no blast that blew could injure them, being but airy nothing themselves."

"Holy St. Benedict! you believe in them then?"

"No

“No, I have not said I did. I have only spoken of them in the light in which they are regarded by those who do—but hark! methinks I hear the trampling of horses.”

Mactalla instantly became silent, and both listened attentively, but without hearing aught for a few minutes but the raging of the wind in the wood. They then clearly distinguished the clattering of horses’ hoofs, accompanied by a confused murmur of mens’ voices.

“Signor,” cried Mactalla, in a whispering tone, and suddenly pressing the arm of Osmond, “let us be cautious; for I should not be in the least surprised if the men we hear were a troop of banditti. Holy St. Benedict take us into his keeping, and get us safely through the perils and dangers of this night!”

Osmond, who did not by any means think his conjecture erroneous, now in his turn reminded him of the necessity of silence. The wind again rising, prevented their hearing for some minutes any other sounds than

than those it occasioned. On its subsiding, they were startled by hearing the horses near the thicket which sheltered them, and a hoarse voice at the entrance exclaiming —“Ho, here appears to be a spot that will afford shelter to ourselves and beasts; let us alight, and get out of this d—mnd storm, which has given me a greater drenching than I ever got before.”

This speech induced Osmond and his companions to change their quarters. On advancing a little farther into the wood, they again paused, for the purpose of listening to the conversation of those who had obliged them to move, and which in a few minutes convinced them they were not wrong in their surmises respecting them.

They complained of their ill luck, in not having met with the booty they expected that night.

“But the night is not yet over,” observed one of the party, “and before it is we may be more fortunate; so instead of any longer railing or lamenting, let us endeavour

deavour to do something to make ourselves comfortable. Come, stir about, lads, and try to get something together to make a fire."

This order being obeyed, a quantity of faggots was speedily collected, and a light being struck, a fire was kindled, round which the party ranged themselves. The strong glare which the flame, as it spread, cast around them, permitted Osmond, on his cautiously advancing a few paces for the purpose, to view their countenances, than which nothing could be conceived more illustrative of their profession; cunning and ferocity were imprest on every feature, and an additional fierceness given to their aspects by their savage style of dress. Notwithstanding the disappointment they spoke of, and the weather, they appeared in high spirits; but, like their appearance, their mirth was of the roughest nature.

"Tivoli," cried one of them, who, by his ordering, seemed to have some authority

thority over the rest, "what provisions have you got?"

"But little, if any," grumbled out a rough sullen bass voice, "as you might know, if you gave yourself time to reflect; for many hands make light work."

"True, true," assented the other; "I might have known, as you say, that we can't eat our cake and have it; but produce us what you have, and like an honest lad as you are, try if you can't rummage us out a flask of wine—it will help to warm us. I am devilish hungry, however, let me tell you."

Wine being produced, the ruffians became still more noisy and argumentative than they had before been.

"Oh, holy St. Benedict!" at length softly exclaimed Mactalla, in his master's ear, "what will become of us?"

"Trust in Heaven," returned Osmond, in the same low key.

"So I do, Signor, blessed be the name of St. Benedict."

"Hollo,

“Hollo, Tivoli,” vociferated he who appeared to be the leader of this band of villains, “I say Tivoli, I’ll be d—mnd, if you don’t replenish the fire, if we shan’t soon be without a spark, which, seeing there is no prospect of the weather soon clearing, would not be over agreeable.”

After a pause, Tivoli replied—“Why I can find no more faggots.”

“By the head of our fraternity,” cried the other, “but that is a good joke. I trow if you can see the wood for trees. Here, numskull, take this brand and search about; dive deeper into the wood, and I’ll warrant me you’ll have something more than your pains for your trouble.”

“I’ll bear him company,” said another, starting up, and also snatching a brand from the fire, the strong glare of which falling full upon his features, permitted Osmond and Mactalla to have a full view of them, which the latter no sooner had, than starting back—“Oh, holy St. Benedict!”

dict!" crossing himself, and in an undertone, he exclaimed, "who could have thought of such a thing? but that man's being here is wonderful."

"What man?" demanded Osmond, with involuntary quickness, but also in a low voice.

"Don't question me now, Signor; I am too much hurried to be able to answer you."

"Dive deep into the wood, lads, and you'll be certain of getting plenty of fuel," again vociferated the leader; "we lack comfort much; so let us at least have that of a good fire."

The men advanced in the direction in which Osmond and his companions were. The former kept a watchful eye upon them, and as they gradually advanced, gradually retreated. The little French boy was here as troublesome a companion as he had proved on the road—his attention being so engrossed by the banditti, that he continually suffered Osmond and Mac-

talla

talla to get the start of him, and then his fears returning, obliged them, by some vehement, though not loud exclamation, to retrace their way back for him.

At length Osmond, in consequence of hearing the ruffians who had been sent to gather wood, suddenly stop, as if to listen, began to fear the boy had been overheard—a fear in which he was shortly confirmed by hearing one of them exclaim—“Aye, aye, d—mn—tion, what can it be?”

He paused no longer, but driving the boy before him, stopt not again until, with his companions, he found himself in a small opening amongst some thickets, on the edge of a rapid river. Owing to the remoteness of this spot from the place where they had left the banditti, he conceived they could not find a better one to stop in. At all events, they had no other alternative than either to do so, or retrace the way they had come, the thickets that extended on either side appearing absolutely impenetrable.

“Yes,

“ Yes, yes,” said Mactalla; replying to what he said on the subject, “ we are here, I think, perfectly safe, blessed be good St. Benedict for his attention to my prayers. The moment I set my foot in the town of Cassino, where stands his own convent, founded by himself, I shall take care to make him a return, and that of no trifling nature either, for his goodness on this occasion. Yes, yes, he shall find I have a proper sense of gratitude for his protection of us this night.”

Osmond could not forbear smiling at the simplicity of his attendant, although by no means at ease in his own mind—his uncertainty of the direction the banditti might pursue not permitting him to be without some apprehension still of their being discovered. It now occurred to him to inquire whether Mactalla had put up any weapons of defence for them? and to his great vexation was answered in the negative; for his great omission in not doing which, Mactalla implored his forgiveness, and accounted

counted for by declaring he was so agitated between joy and grief at quitting Acerenza, that he scarce knew what he was about.

The fury of the storm had by this time much abated—the rain was nearly over, the wind had sunk into a hollow murmur, and at intervals the moon showed her pale face, as on that sad night, “when Arindal the mighty fell, when Daura the lovely failed, fair as the moon on the hills of Fura, white as the driven snow, sweet as the breathing gale.”

“The weather clears so fast,” said Mac-talla, after a long and profound silence, “that I dare say the banditti will soon leave the coast clear to us again.”

“Till the return of morning, however, I think it better for us to remain where we now are,” observed Osmond.

“Assuredly, Signor; but,” starting, and laying his hand upon his master’s arm, “blessed St. Benedict! is there not something rustling amongst the trees?”

Osmond

Osmond listened for a few minutes attentively; then—" 'tis but the horses moving," cried he; "let us, however, be silent, lest an enemy be nearer than we imagine."

The silence he enjoined was soon, however, interrupted by the boy (who, with the restlessness peculiar to his age, had wandered away to a distance) exclaiming aloud, as if in the greatest agony—"I am killed! I am killed!"

Osmond instantly flew to his assistance, and raising him from the ground, on which he found him extended, enquired what had happened?

"Oh master, master," said or rather roared the boy, "one of my legs is surely broke, for the mule has trod upon it."

"By St. Benedict, I wish," cried Mac-talla, who had followed close upon the steps of his master, "that it was your head she had got under her foot, and that she had kept it there till the day of judgment."

Osmond having satisfied himself that the
leg

leg was not fractured, endeavoured to silence the boy, and at last, though not without much difficulty, succeeded.

“A pretty thing, you little urchin,” proceeded Mactalla, “if, through your squalling, any mischief should befall us. By the Lord I have a great mind to make both you and your mule pay this instant for all the vagaries you have both been going on with ever since you left Acerenza. Signor, do you think he could possibly have been heard by the ruffians?”

“I hope not,” replied Osmond.

“Ah, the cut-throat dogs, what an escape we have had from them!”

“You should return thanks to Heaven for it,” rejoined his master.

“So I do, Signor, so I do; blessed be the name of St. Benedict for his kindness to us.”

“Aye, aye, you have reason indeed to be thankful to him for his kindness in throwing you into our power,” exclaimed a hoarse voice at the moment, immediately behind

behind him ; and at the same instant he felt his arms seized, as were also those of Osmond.

Their feelings on the occasion at finding themselves surprised by the villains they flattered themselves they had escaped from, may easier be conceived than described.

Osmond, however, speedily collecting himself, made an effort to regain their liberty, but an unsuccessful one, by offering to surrender quietly all they were possessed of at the moment, for the purpose. He and Mactalla were forced to mount their own horses, not however without much resistance on the part of the latter—he stamped, stormed, begged, prayed, but all to no purpose.

“ There’s no use in praying to us,” cried one of the gang ; “ what’s become of your friend St. Benedict, that you should leave off doing so to him ? ”

“ Ha, ha, Monsieur Frenchman,” exclaimed another of the party, “ ’tis to you
we

we are indebted for this prize. Tivoli, let's see what his mule is loaded with."

Tivoli obeyed. The provisions he produced were eagerly devoured. They then remounted, daylight beginning to appear, and, with Osmond and Mactalla in the centre, set off at a smart pace.

After pursuing some time the road their prisoners had deviated from, in order to obtain shelter from the storm, they struck into a deep forest, which they continued to traverse for a considerable period, in the most zig-zag manner imaginable, making openings for themselves through apparently impenetrable thickets, by the removal of matted boughs, which they still replaced, not only with astonishing dexterity, but so as to deceive the nicest eye.

CHAP. VII.

“ Black was the forest, thick with beech it stood,
Horrid with fern, and intricate with thorn ;
Few paths of human feet, or tracks of beasts were worn.”

OSMOND, who possessed in an eminent degree that cool and steady courage which keeps the mind collected in the hour of danger, could not but admire the ingenuity they displayed in the methods they had recourse to to prevent pursuit.

Their not having put him and his companions immediately to death, induced him to believe it was not their intention to do so ; but either to sell them to slavery in
some

some foreign land, or keep them in a state of servitude upon themselves.

This idea induced him to take as much notice as possible of the labyrinths they travelled, that in case he should be fortunate enough to succeed in making his escape, he might not be altogether destitute of a clue to guide him through them.

At length, emerging from the "close dungeon of innumerable boughs," through which they had so long been pursuing their way, Osmond beheld a rude lawn, terminated by a narrow but rapid river, on the opposite bank of which arose the massy walls of an immense fabric, surmounted by tremendous heights, bespread with wood; and exhibiting a scene of solemn grandeur, rendered still more impressive by the decaying appearance of the pile they commanded—for as the dawn was by this time sufficiently advanced to permit objects to be distinguished, Osmond could perceive that many of its proudly-swelling and receding towers were green

with the moss of age, and several of its turrets and strongholds shattered and crumbling away.

But as (to use the words of a celebrated author) we look upon the wounds of a defaced soldier with more veneration than we do upon the most exact proportions of a beautiful woman, so in all probability this magnificent structure inspired Osmond with greater admiration as well as awe, now in the wane of its days, than it would have done in all its pride and glory.

The pleasure, however, the contemplation of it afforded him was as transient as involuntary. The dreadful purposes to which there was reason to suppose it now devoted—the idea of the equally dreadful fate that perhaps awaited him and his companions within it—for he speedily learned that this was the retreat of the banditti—made him presently view it with horror.

On reaching the river, the ruffians stopt, and a bugle being sounded by one of them, a draw-bridge was quickly let down,
which

which crossing, they entered upon a deep vaulted passage, guarded at each end by a heavy portal of iron and wood, and still further defended by towers. On quitting this, they alighted, and proceeded on foot through a succession of gloomy courts, encompassed by mouldering buildings, to a hall of vast magnitude, lighted by a large fire and several immense lamps, with flaming burners, suspended from the cieling, and which altogether, from its numerous arcades, its double row of pointed windows, divided by spacious galleries, the stately pillars that supported its ponderous and richly-fretted roof, and the various outlets by means of small gothic doors that appeared among these, strongly resembled the interior of a cathedral. At the upper end was a large table, which two men were busied in spreading for an entertainment. Of these one of the ruffians demanded whether the Captain and his party were yet returned? and on being answered in the negative, he and his companions

panions immediately withdrew, in rude and clamorous confusion, to exchange their wet clothes for dry ones, leaving Osmond and Mactalla to their own cogitations.

No sooner had they withdrawn, than Osmond, anxious to mitigate the terror which his countenance evinced his entertaining for their personal safety, by imparting to him the conjectures he had formed with regard to the intentions of the banditti concerning them, turned eagerly towards Mactalla, who stood at a little distance from him; but to his surprise, instead of being able to catch his attention, he saw it rivetted upon an opposite and half-open door, at which a beckoning hand was just visible, and which at last he approached, but with seeming reluctance, and instantly after disappeared.

This incident gave birth to a more unpleasing sensation in the mind of Osmond than any he had before experienced. When he reflected, however, on the length of time Mactalla had been in the service of

of

of his noble friends at Acerenza, and the high character they had given him, the suspicion it awakened of his integrity was done away, and in its place the possibility there was of his having recognized among the banditti some person whom he had formerly known, suggested itself to him—an idea that gained strength, on his recalling to his recollection the surprise he had suddenly given indications of experiencing in the wood. But that any good was likely to accrue from this circumstance, Osmond could scarcely flatter himself, in consequence of his conceiving it scarcely possible that any one but a mind incapable of a generous action, could be the associate of such wretches.

Harassed by fatigue and agitation, he threw himself on a bench near the fire. But neither fatigue nor agitation prevented his making vigorous efforts to keep himself from sinking into utter despair—efforts, however, which the uninterrupted leisure he now had to reflect on his situation,

tion, would hardly have permitted to be successful, but for the firm reliance he had on Providence.

The shock occasioned by the change in it was heightened by the sudden manner in which that change had taken place—the anguish it inspired by the contrast he could not help drawing between what it now was and had been.

Oh where were now the pleasing hopes, the delightful visions he had indulged in with almost a certainty of seeing them realized! Gone, lost, dispersed, without leaving aught behind but their aggravating remembrance. Yes, the recollection of departed joys, like a gloomy ghost, or rather a malicious fiend, heightened the horrors of his present situation, by forcing him to contrast them with past pleasures.

At length, from the contemplation of what he could not meliorate, he tried to detach his thoughts, by surveying the spacious apartment in which he found himself.

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The imposing grandeur of its appearance was well calculated to do this, by bringing to his recollection the days of other years, when doubtless far other sounds than now prevailed within it, awoke its echoes.

“How humbled is now this proud edifice!” he mentally exclaimed, “how degraded its honours! What a saddening conviction does its altered state afford, of the fluctuating nature of all sublunary things! Its towers no longer yielding repose to the weary traveller—its chambers security or peace—clamour and intemperance presiding at its banquets—and violence stalking round its dreary walls!”

The sound of a bugle from without interrupted his meditations—a sound which quickly and in tumultuous disorder brought back most of the party that had made him prisoner. They passed with quickness through the hall to meet the new comers, consisting of their Captain and several comrades without, and with whom they

speedily returned, together with two females and a gentleman, who had just fallen into their hands.

To describe what Osmond felt at this moment, at beholding females in the power of such ruffians, is impossible. How much more so, therefore, to describe what he suffered, when, owing to the accidental falling back of her veil, he discovered, in the features of one of these unhappy ladies, the enchanting features of Miss Raymond!

For a minute horror suspended all his faculties. Then—"Oh, could it be, was it possible," in agony he asked himself, "that she, whose beauty was sufficient to make an anchorite almost forget his vows, was she in the power of a lawless banditti!"

From an attitude of deep despondence he was at length roused by the fainting of her mother (as he took it for granted the other lady was), on the seat which had been pointed out to her on her

entering the hall. He instantly sprung forward, forgetful, in his eagerness to render her assistance, of the effect which his sudden and unexpected appearance might perhaps have upon Miss Raymond.

On his approach, she lifted her eyes from the inanimate form of her mother, and meeting his, started back, with a look that seemed to say she was doubtful at the moment of the evidence of her senses. Then, in a trembling, an agitated voice—"Gracious Heaven!" she exclaimed, "do I really behold Mr. Munro? Has he then been as unfortunate as we are?"

An expressive look was the only way in which Osmond was capable of replying at the moment to this question.

Miss Raymond now appearing to recollect herself a little, replaced her arm under the head of her mother, and removed the veil with which, like herself, she also was covered, to give her air; whilst Osmond, regaining the power of speech, entreated a glass of water. This, though neither

very speedily nor very graciously, he succeeded in obtaining; and by its aid she was soon after brought to herself.

On regaining her senses—"Oh, my dear mother," cried her lovely daughter, as she supported her still drooping head on her bosom, "we are not alone unfortunate; Mr. Munro is equally so; for he also has fallen into the power (lowering her voice) of these wretches."

"Mr. Munro!" repeated her mother, with quickness, and raising her head, she turned her eyes full upon Osmond: "Good Heavens, is it possible?"

Osmond bowed respectfully on catching her glance.—"Be assured, Madam," he said, "I shall cease to regret the circumstance that brought me hither, if it should furnish me with an opportunity of rendering you any service. At all events, whether it should or not, I trust it will be some little mitigation of your distress, some consolation to you, to know that there is a person at hand who sympathizes
in

in your sufferings, and would willingly risk his life to serve you."

"Your countenance convinces me of your sincerity," with a grateful look, returned Mrs. Raymond; "and though I am well aware that the acknowledgment is calculated to fasten upon me the imputation of selfishness, I cannot help confessing that I derive satisfaction from seeing you here; but 'tis natural, and therefore I trust in some degree excusable, to be pleased, in the hour of distress, at meeting with those who can sympathize with us. I will construe finding a friend in this terrifying place into a favourable omen, and not only pray but hope that Heaven will deliver us in safety from it."

As, from some words which had escaped Miss Raymond, Osmond understood the gentleman who had been brought in along with them was Mr. Raymond, he could not help being surprised at his not making an attempt to afford the least assistance to Mrs. Raymond; and still more on catching
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ing him, while the above conversation was passing, attentively regarding him from behind a pillar, with (Osmond could not help thinking from his attitude, for his countenance was completely shaded from view by the cape of a great-coat, and a large hat) an angry and indignant aspect, for which he could not possibly account, as he knew he was sufficiently near to distinguish his daughter's address to him, and of consequence know he did not belong to the banditti.

Osmond was prevented replying to Mrs. Raymond by the approach of the Captain. He came to inquire whether the ladies chose any supper, which, notwithstanding the hour, he denominated the meal to which he was about sitting down; and on being answered in the negative—"O very well," he exclaimed, with an air of the most callous indifference; "then there is no use in your remaining any longer here: so hollo, Cesaria—I say Cesaria, hollo."

"Here,

"Here, noble Captain," answered an old woman, limping towards him from a side door, with a lamp in one hand, a stick in the other, and a large bunch of keys dangling from her girdle, and so withered and so wild in her attire, so perfectly corresponding with the representation given of witches, that if an inhabitant of England some hundred years back, Osmond made no doubt she would have been compelled to go through some disagreeable ordeal.

"Shew these ladies to their apartments in the north tower," he resumed; "and that gentleman," pointing to Mr. Raymond, who still retained his station at the pillar: "as to you, Sir," glancing at Osmond, "a chamber is prepared for you in another part of the building."

Osmond was concerned to hear this; nor were the ladies less so. Almost convinced, however, that to oppose the arrangement would be useless, they expressed, but by looks, the discontent it gave them.

"Yes,

“ Yes, noble Captain,” said the hag, replying to her master, and motioning at the same time to his fair prisoners to follow her.

As Mrs. Raymond rose to obey this motion, she kissed her hand, with a look of gratitude, to Osmond; nor did her lovely daughter pass him without noticing him by a similar one.

He continued motionless on the spot where she had left him, gazing after her; and then when she had entirely disappeared from his view, amidst the remote and clustered pillars of the hall—invoking all those

“ Angels and seraphs who delight in goodness,
To forsake their skies, and to her couch descend,”

until roused from his abstraction by a violent pull by the sleeve, and the hoarse voice of one of the ruffians exclaiming—
“ D—mn me, Sir, are you deaf? I have been bawling in your ear this half hour,

to

to know whether you would chuse any supper?"

Osmond, sick at heart from the horrid fears which had taken possession of him respecting Miss Raymond, replied in the negative.

"Then I presume," the other rejoined, "you have no objection to retiring to rest?"

Osmond bowed.

"Here then, Ossuna," beckoning to a man at some distance, "here, I say; shew the Signor here to one of the chambers off the long gallery."

Ossuna nodded, and approached with a lamp; and at the same moment the other went back to the supper-table, which by this time was covered, and about which most of the gang had taken their seats, all apparently in high glee.

But though anxious to retire from a scene of such coarseness and riot as the present, Osmond was withheld from immediately quitting

quitting it, by the surprise he experienced at beholding Mactalla, just as Ossuna was approaching him, busily employed, and with an air of the greatest satisfaction, in attending on the robbers.

This sight revived his former suspicion concerning him, but which his entirely yielding to was still opposed by the consideration of the character he had received of him, and at length usurped by another, namely, of his brain being turned by terror—a suspicion in which the longer he attended to him the more he was confirmed, as nothing could possibly be stranger than his grimaces, or more curious than his replies to the questions which from time to time the robbers addressed to him.

“What’s your name, fellow?” at last demanded the Captain, slightly glancing at him over his shoulder, as he stood behind his chair, with a golden goblet in his hand.

“Mactalla, an please your reverence,”
with

with a low bow, he replied, although at the moment the Captain's back was entirely turned to him.

"Very well, then, I say Mr. Mac," but without looking at him, and with his mouth half full, "I say what are you good for?"

"Why, please your reverence, like my neighbours, perhaps not good for a great deal: but then (with quickness) I am willing."

"Ha—willingness makes amends in some degree for want of abilities; but I say—I suppose you could put your hand to something?"

"Yes, please your reverence," with a rather low bow, though still the eyes of the Captain were directed from him, "to any thing you should wish me to lay it on."

"Ha, very well, very well, that will do; we want assistants in the menial line, for instance in the stables. I suppose you could trim a horse?"

"Yes, or an ass, please your reverence, if one fell in my way."

"Ha,

“Ha, ha, well said, Mr. Mac,” shouted one of the party—“here’s my service to you, and let me tell you ’tis not here you’ll be likely to meet with one.”

“Yes, yes, it must be so,” said Osmond, mentally, and with a deep sigh, as he motioned Ossuna to lead the way from the hall; “yes, yes, ’tis too evident that fear has deranged his intellects. Unhappy creature! and yet he is not so great an object of compassion as at the first glance one might be led to imagine; for doubtless the keenness of his feelings is blunted by the state to which he is reduced.”

From the hall Osmond was conducted through several winding passages to a spacious staircase of oval form, terminating in a long gallery, near the extremity of which Ossuna opened a door, and bade him enter, presenting him at the same time with the lamp he had hitherto carried. Osmond obeyed, and immediately after heard the door locked on the outside. Left to himself, he elevated the lamp, in order

order to be better enabled to see about him, and found himself within a large bed-chamber, with two other doors half open in it. Curiosity and suspicion inducing him to examine beyond these, he found they merely led into small cabinets, to which there appeared no other means of obtaining admission than what they afforded. His examination of these over, he resolved on admitting the light of day, if possible, into his apartment; but to his infinite mortification, soon found that all the spaces formerly occupied by lattices were now blocked up with closely-cemented stones.

Compelled to be content with the sickly light of the lamp, he placed it on an old-fashioned dressing-table, and threw himself into an equally old-fashioned chair beside it, unable to rest, or rather shuddering with horror at the thoughts of resigning himself to repose, from the dreadful apprehensions with which he was tormented about Miss Raymond.

“Oh, should these soul-harrowing apprehensions be realized!” he wildly cried—he paused, he started—“Even now—even now,” with greater emotion, he exclaimed, “they may be on the point of being so—even now some ruffian may be stalking to her chamber—even now, regardless of their mingling shrieks, be tearing her from the arms of her mother, the grasp of her father!”

His veins swelled, his temples throbbed, every limb shook with agitation, as this dreadful idea suggested itself to his imagination. With a glaring eye he searched round the chamber, in hope of discovering some weapon of defence; but nothing met it but mouldering furniture and dark wainscotting, destitute of any ornament, but here and there a fragment of tapestry. He then proceeded to the door, and tried to force it, for the purpose of going in quest of the north tower, and risking his life, if necessary, in uniting with the father to try and preserve the daughter; but
it

it resisted all his efforts to wrench it from the hinges.

With suspended breath he then listened attentively at it; but no sigh, no scream, no shriek of distress met his ear. A death-like stillness prevailed throughout, but a stillness from which he derived no consolation, when he reflected that, from the magnitude of the building, the most atrocious deeds might be perpetrated at one end, without those at the other having the smallest intimation of them.

At length the impossibility of accomplishing his wishes in the present instance induced him to endeavour to calm the apprehensions to which they were owing. He called his reason, his religion, his fortitude to his aid. He reflected, that she for whose safety he was so agonized, was under the special protection of a divine Being—of Him, whose angels watch over the couch of innocence and virtue—of Him, whose eye, whose ear, was never closed;

closed; who was at once omniscient and omnipresent.

As his confidence in Heaven revived, the tumult of his spirits, the burning heat of his brain, subsided. He quitted the door; and though the appearance of the bed was extremely uninviting—its long dingy curtains of dark-green velvet, and moth-eaten coverlid of the same, giving it a sepulchral air, chilling to the feelings—threw himself upon it, but without taking off any of his cloaths.

But instead of courting sleep, he now busied himself in recalling to his recollection all that had passed between him and the fair Cordelia in the hall; in reflecting on the enquiries she must have made, the conversations she must have held respecting him, to be acquainted with his name, and render it also so familiar to her mother: but the idea that to curiosity alone both might be owing, checked the hopes they might otherwise have given birth to.

That

That it was either from the Marchesa Morati or Lady Elizara she had learnt who he was, he could not doubt; and he felt happy at the idea, from his conviction of their favourable sentiments for him—until he reflected, that perhaps it was solely owing to the flattering terms in which he had been mentioned to her, and to no prepossession in his favour, that he was indebted for the notice she had taken of him.

“ But how ungenerous to wish her to feel such a prepossession—to wish her to harbour sentiments which could not fail of being productive of regret, of uneasiness to her, so great are the obstacles, so little the likelihood of their ever being overcome, which fortune has placed between us.” He reflected—“ Henceforth it shall be my study to suppress such a wish, to avoid her society as much as possible. Ah Heavens! how idly do I talk! how strangely do I forget our present situation! Perhaps

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haps I shall be but too soon convinced that I shall never have another opportunity of beholding her."

The anguish imparted by this thought, since he could not conquer, he at length strove to lose in sleep; but the repose he courted his perturbed imagination would not permit him to enjoy. Though his eyes were closed, frightful and disjointed visions harassed and perplexed him: from one of these he was suddenly roused by a noise outside the chamber door, but which, for a minute or two, he knew not whether to imagine ideal or not.

At length convinced his ear had not deceived him, and that it was occasioned by some one endeavouring to unlock it in such a way as should prevent their being overheard, he softly quitted the bed, and, approaching the door, applied his eye to the keyhole, but involuntarily started back on doing so, in consequence of perceiving one apparently on fire, and of more than human

human size, glaring through it. A moment's reflection, however, by enabling him to account for the extraordinary appearance of this eye, which was intirely owing to an oblique light interposing between it and the door, made him smile at himself for having done so, and apply his again to the aperture; on doing which, he distinguished two men, the hand of one upon the key, and to whose cautious efforts to open it the door at length gave way; and Osmond retreating behind it, determined at least to have a struggle for his life; for that it had been opened in this manner for the purpose of dispatching him while he (as it was imagined) slept, he had not the remotest doubt.

The men on advancing a few paces in the chamber, stopt, and the foremost of them, who carried a lanthorn, emitting just a sufficient ray to permit their persons to be visible, exclaimed, in a whispering voice, after listening attentively a few minutes—
“Aye, aye, he is fast asleep, little dream-

ing, I warrant, of what is about happening to him."

"No, I dare say not," replied the other, in the same low key; "but come, I'll be off, as you say you don't want my assistance; but take care you don't neglect making a proper use of the present opportunity for quieting him; such another may not occur again. In less than half an hour I shall expect to hear that you have settled his business properly."

A significant nod was the only reply he received; and retiring, his companion secured the door with the same caution with which he had opened it; after which, with noiseless steps, he approached the bed.

Within a few paces of it, a sudden elevation of the lanthorn causing the light to fall full on his features, those of Mac-talla became visible to the astonished Osmond.

All his former suspicions of him instantly revived. He no longer doubted his being an accomplice of the banditti—no longer

longer doubted his having betrayed him into their power, and now undertaken the horrid task of murdering him.

“ Dear and amiable Marchesa,” he involuntarily exclaimed to himself, “ little did you imagine what a fatal present you were making me : but he shall not—no, the villain shall not quietly triumph in his wickedness ; he shall at least experience the shame of detection.” And Osmond was springing forwards, when a kind of fearful curiosity to see what steps he would take, on finding the bed vacated, suddenly withheld him.

Having placed the lanthorn on the floor, Mactalla, gently opening the side curtains, thrust his head between, and continued for a minute in a listening attitude ; then, drawing from his bosom what seemed to be a glittering dagger, he appeared to plunge it repeatedly into the bed.

Osmond’s feelings, no longer controllable, he was again on the point of rushing on him, when again he was prevented by

a sudden exclamation of—"Oh, holy St. Benedict! I am ruined—I am deceived! I have trusted in a villain, and he has undone me! Yes," he continued, snatching up the lamp, and tearing open the curtains, "he has made away with him himself, and that not a minute ago; for (laying his hand upon it) the bed is still warm: but I'll be revenged—yes, I'll be revenged on you, you deceitful villain, though I should lose my life for being so,"—hastily advancing as he spoke towards the door.

"Hold, my friend, hold," cried Osmond, interposing as cautiously as possible between him and it, and with forced calmness, the sudden transition from despair to hope, suspicion to confidence, occasioning him no less emotion than had his late dreadful apprehensions, and also no little remorse, for ever having doubted the integrity of Mactalla, notwithstanding the sufficient excuse he had had for doing so.

"Is it you—is it yourself that I hear?" cried Mactalla, in a transport of joy, which, had

had a doubt to his prejudice still lingered in the mind of Osmond, would have completely dissipated it, elevating the lanthorn to his face as he spoke, in order to assure himself he was not mistaken—"Blessed be the Powers above for your being still alive and safe. I thought Felisco had done your business for you; for evil communication, they say, corrupts good manners: but by the Lord if he had, it should have been the worst business for him he ever had a hand in."

"Pray explain the recent scene," said Osmond, advancing from the door, and motioning for him also to quit it, "which I confess alarmed me not a little."

"I cannot tell you particulars now," replied Mactalla; "I can only tell you that in the course of the night you shall be informed of what you are so desirous to hear—'tis now getting late."

"Late!" interrupted Osmond, not a little surprised. "Is it possible I can have slept so long?"

“ ’Tis very true indeed,” rejoined Mac-talla; “ ’tis as I have already told you, late, and such of the gang as intend being upon the prowl to-night are already off. As soon as I leave you, repair to the hall, where you’ll find refreshments ready for you. After partaking of these, express a wish for a little air; and on descending to the court, turn to the right, and keep in that direction till you come to an arched gateway: pass through it, and a little beyond it, at the left side, you’ll perceive a narrow passage; there remain till I come to you. Should any one inquire by what means it was you got out of your chamber, say Felisco opened the door for you, which will be readily believed, as he often has the charge of the prisoners.”

“ Hold,” cried Osmond, catching him by the sleeve, in order to prevent his immediately quitting him, as, upon laying the lanthorn upon the table to supply the place of the lamp, which had long been extinguished, he was about doing—“ Can
you

you give me any information of the other prisoners the banditti made last night?"

"Me, no—I know of no other than ourselves."

Osmond then informed him.

After staring at him for a minute with a vacant look—"You are joking," cried he.

"No, I am serious indeed," returned Osmond; "Mr. Raymond and his family are now in the same unhappy situation that we are."

"Well, I'll enquire of Felisco about them."

"Who is this Felisco, whom you have so often mentioned to me—this man with whom you appear to be so intimate here?"

"Bye and bye you shall hear all, Signor; but at present I cannot gratify your curiosity."

"Well, do not fail to make the inquiries you have promised, and endeavour to learn the way to the north tower."

Mactalla, as if impatient to be gone;

only nodded, and then vanished from the room.

Osmond remained for some minutes after him in a most painful state of anxiety and suspense, owing to the vague hopes and expectations which his words had given rise to; for unsatisfactory as they were, still Osmond clearly comprehended from them that a scheme was in agitation for their deliverance.

As soon as he had a little collected himself, he quitted his chamber, but without taking the lanthorn, the gallery beyond it admitting the light of day. He had not advanced a great way down this, when the sight of some steps he had not noticed before inclined him to believe he had mistaken his way, and he was thinking of retracing it, for the purpose of trying to detect his error, when, casting his eyes forward, he beheld a staircase to the left, which induced him to advance; and though on gaining this he found it was not the one he had ascended to the gallery, still

concluding it led to the hall, he ventured to go down it. As he proceeded, he could not forbear pausing to admire its singular form, expanding towards the top like a fan, and the richness of its sculptured walls and cornices, and which led him to believe it had formerly been the principal staircase—a belief in which he was confirmed on finding it terminated in an immense rotunda, covered with a majestic dome resting on rows of marble pillars, and from which several passages branched off in various directions. This magnificent apartment opened by means of several folding-doors, now more than half demolished, to the hanging wood, which, on his approach to the edifice, had caught the attention of Osmond, and over which the setting sun now shed a mellow lustre, that rendered still more picturesque their appearance. Osmond eagerly advanced to one of these openings, to inhale the fresh breeze that sighed through the waving foliage, and gaze for an instant upon the romantic scenery

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nery before him. Almost insensibly the contemplation of this calmed his spirits, and, wrapt in the pensive musings it inspired, he might perhaps have continued some time, had he not suddenly recollected his appointment with Mactalla.

He re-ascended, as he thought, the staircase he had come down ; but a door at the top convinced him he was wrong.

Fearful of being involved in the intricate passages below, he knocked at this door, for the purpose of trying whether any one was within, that he might enquire his way to the hall.

A voice immediately replied—to which his heart vibrated—the soft, the melodious voice of Miss Raymond. She desired him to come in. With a hand trembling with agitation, he immediately tried to open the door ; but it resisted his effort—there was a key in it—he tried again, and was more successful.

He found both mother and daughter near it, evidently watching with looks of anxiety

anxiety and terror for the appearance of the person who had demanded admission. The most joyful surprise appeared in the countenance of both at seeing him.

“Good Heavens! Mr. Munro,” delightedly exclaimed Mrs. Raymond, eagerly approaching him as she spoke, and presenting her hand with the familiar and affectionate air of an old friend, “is it you I behold? How did you discover where we were?”

“By chance,” replied Osmond, eagerly taking her proffered hand and pressing his lips to it, his eyes, however, a little wandering from her towards her lovely daughter; “but a chance which I shall for ever bless, since it affords me an opportunity of quieting, in some degree, the apprehensions you must be under, by informing you that I think there is a hope of our being able to effect our escape.”

He then, in a lower voice, and as briefly as possible, gave her the particulars of his recent conversation with his servant, and
ended.

ended by solemnly assuring her, except their deliverance could be effected as well as his, nothing should induce him to quit the place.

Mrs. Raymond listened to him with profound attention, and was evidently on the point of replying to this assurance, when Mr. Raymond prevented her, by exclaiming, in the most ungracious accent, from the lower end of the room, which was long, and had once been magnificent, and at which he stood by an open lattice, with his back towards the door—"Sir, your interference relative to us is not necessary: we have the means of effecting our deliverance in our own hands."

Astonished and confused by this speech, Osmond for a minute could only gaze at the ungracious person from whom it proceeded, and Mrs. Raymond, as if to ask the occasion of it. He was then on the point of exculpating himself from the charge of officiousness, of which he conceived it indirectly accused him, when Mrs. Raymond prevented

prevented what he would have said by eagerly exclaiming—"My—Mr. Raymond, I mean," hesitating a little, and colouring as if confused, by having been on the point of saying something she should not, "has merely said what he did, to prevent your having any unnecessary trouble on our account. We"—

"Ah, Madam," involuntarily interrupted Osmond, "I could never consider as a trouble any thing I did for you or yours. Great, however, as is the happiness I should have derived from having had the power of rendering you a service, I sincerely rejoice, from the conviction it affords me of your safety, that in the present instance none is required from me."

Mrs. Raymond bowed her thanks.—
"About two hours ago," cried she, "the Captain of the banditti entered this apartment, to inform us that we should be restored to liberty, and conducted in safety to the place we wish to go to, provided, in addition to what he has already received
from

from us, he obtained the further sum of a thousand pounds. Mr. Raymond eagerly embraced this proposal, and has given him a draft on a banker in Naples, to whom the letter of credit he brought with him from England has been transmitted. With this draft a man was immediately dispatched; and as soon as he returns, we are to be liberated. Heaven grant that the same moment may see us all beyond these walls; for should you remain behind, my joy at our restoration to liberty will be not a little damped, especially as I rather apprehend, from the Captain having laid us under no injunction of secrecy with respect to his haunt, that there is but little likelihood of our being able to describe it to those who could effect your deliverance from it."

"For your generous anxiety for that, accept my acknowledgments, Madam," cried Osmond; "I trust I shall be successful in the efforts I shall myself make for it; but should I be disappointed, trust me
I shall

I shall still derive the greatest consolation from the idea of your safety."

"So I am convinced," replied Mrs. Raymond; "for the liberal heart can never be solely engrossed by selfish anxiety."

"Psha, psha, have done with this sentimental stuff!" exclaimed Mr. Raymond, still with his back turned towards Osmond, and in the same tone in which he had before spoken; "and let that gentleman retire; for should he be surprised here, disagreeable consequences may ensue from the circumstance."

CHAP. VIII.

“ The wise and active conquer difficulties
By daring to attempt them : Sloth and Folly
Shiver and shrink at sight of Toil and Hazard,
And make th’ impossibility they fear.”

Rowe.

“ TRUE, Sir,” immediately returned Osmond, but with a cheek flushed with indignation, “ I am to blame for not having reflected on this myself :” then, after a gentle pressure, resigning the hand of Mrs. Raymond, “ farewell, Madam,” he added ; “ should we never meet again”——

“ Oh, do not dwell upon so horrid an idea,” eagerly interrupting him, and turning pale ; “ remember that to doubt the
goodness

goodness of Providence is to merit not experiencing it."

Osmond bowed.—"Be assured, Madam," he said, "I do not despair:" then, repeating his adieu, and casting a lingering look at Miss Raymond, who, evidently in a state of the greatest agitation, he saw moving towards a seat, he retreated.

Scarcely had he regained the rotunda, when a man, with a drawn sword, rushed out upon him, from one of the passages, and fiercely demanded what had brought him there?

Osmond, but stepping back a few paces, replied, in repairing to the hall he had mistaken his way.

"Mistaken your way!" echoed the other; "hav'nt you eyes?"

"Certainly," with calmness, returned Osmond; "but the possession of our senses does not always keep us from error."

"Well, I'll put you right this once; but beware how you go astray again; for in
this

"this house we don't like people to be poking their noses into all the holes and corners."

He accordingly led him through several intricate avenues to the hall, at the entrance of which he left him. Here Osmond found two ill-looking fellows, employed in trimming the lamps and lighting them, one of whom pointed out a table to him spread with refreshments, of which, however, the anxiety and perturbation he was in at the moment scarcely permitted him to partake.

The moment his slight repast was over, he expressed a wish, agreeably to the instructions of Mactalla, to go into the air; to which no opposition being made, he quitted the hall, but with an injunction to beware, as the night was coming on, of the ruinous parts of the building; and by a noble flight of marble steps, covered with a spacious portico, and adorned on either side with antique statues of colossal size, he descended into the court.

Had

Had he been in a happier frame of mind, he would have derived inexpressible pleasure from the soft and shadowy scene that prevailed without. The moon, already risen, held her way

“ Through skies where he could count each little star ;”

and nought but the rustling of the trees in the breeze of night, and the wailings of the birds that lodged in the grass-grown and mouldering battlements of the building, was to be heard.

As it was, he felt himself somewhat revived, and, owing to the better hopes with which his recent interview with Mactalla had inspired him, and the dismissal of his apprehensions concerning the Raymonds, tranquillized by it.

He readily found the place to which he had been directed ; the arch led into a court, open at the further end to the cliffs, and bounded on one side by a noble terrace, and the other by a decayed building,
through

through the centre of which extended the narrow-vaulted, and now obscure passage, in which Mactalla had appointed to meet him.

Here, as he awaited his joining him, he involuntarily, and with a degree of astonishment, revolved the variety of strange events he had met with since his departure from his native country—the various agitating changes his feelings had undergone, from despondence to hope, hope to apprehension. Had he foreseen all that had since befallen him, he could not avoid thinking he should have shrunk from the perspective; and this idea made him more than ever admire and glorify the wisdom and goodness of the Creator, in keeping from his creatures a knowledge of the future, and thus preventing the strength and spirits requisite to support them beneath the pressure of misery from being exhausted by anticipations of it—anticipations of what is ever almost more terrific in imagination than reality: for, as an
elegant

elegant author observes, "As there is no prosperous state of life without its calamities, so there is no adversity without its benefits. Ask the great and powerful if they do not feel the pangs of envy and ambition? Enquire of the poor and needy if they have not tasted the sweets of quiet and contentment? Even under the pains of body, the infidelity of friends, or the misconstructions put upon our laudable actions, our minds (when for some time accustomed to these pressures) are sensible of secret flowings of comfort, the present reward of a pious resignation. The evils of this life appear like rocks and precipices, rugged and barren at a distance; but, at our nearer approach, we find little fruitful spots and refreshing springs, mixed with the harshness and deformities of nature."

While Osmond mused in this manner, a ray of light suddenly gleamed across the passage; and hastily turning his head, he beheld,

beheld, through a chink in the wall against which he was leaning, a human countenance earnestly regarding him.

Startled at this incident, lest his having been discovered in such a place should give birth to dangerous suspicions, he instantly determined on quitting it, and watching near it if he could find a spot to secrete himself, for the approach of Mactalla.

He accordingly hurried from it, and, at some distance, shrunk into a dusky recess he espied in the wall. Here he had not been many minutes, when he plainly distinguished approaching steps, and as plainly those of more than one person—a circumstance which induced him to believe he was sought after, in consequence of having been discovered in the passage, especially when he heard, in a minute after, a strange voice exclaiming—“ Yes, yes, I am positive I saw him ;”—to which another, but in a much lower key, replied—“ No such thing, I am certain ; your eyes doubtless

doubtless deceived you." In consequence of which assertion, the other immediately cried—"Then curse me if I sleep till I have convinced you to the contrary. There's not a hole or crevice which I will not search for him; and when I have discovered him, I think I shall be able to make him speak the truth."

This declaration induced Osmond to contract himself into as small a space as possible. His efforts to conceal himself were however unavailing. The men advanced, darted their eyes into the recess, and instantly stopt—he whom Osmond had first heard speak exclaiming as they did so—"He is here, he is here!"

Osmond, finding himself discovered, immediately came forward to meet, with courage whatever might ensue. Instead, however, of meeting with any thing disagreeable, as he rather expected would be the case, he was most agreeably surprised at perceiving the other man was Mactalla, as, from this circumstance, he at once con-

cluded the former to be his friend; in which conclusion he quickly found he was not mistaken."

"This, Signor," cried Mactalla, after he had expressed the satisfaction his not failing in his appointment gave him, which, from his not finding him where they had settled to meet, he was rather apprehensive of his doing, notwithstanding the positive assurances of his companion, who was stationed to watch for him, of having seen him there,—“is Felisco, the young man of whom”——

“Hold, hold, Mactalla,” interrupted his friend, “recollect this is no place to converse in.”

“True,” cried the other, nodding, “I forgot that. Conduct us to one where we shall run no risk of being overheard.”

Felisco obeyed by conducting them to a small room in the remotest and most intricate part of the deserted wing they were then near.

“Blessed St. Benedict!” exclaimed Mactalla,

talla, with an air of satisfaction, as soon as they entered, "but this is a snug place to settle a plot in—Guy Fawkes himself could not have had a better—and by the bye, now that I have mentioned him, it would be a good thing to lay such a one as he did, and send, in the most expeditious manner possible, this old castle, and some forty or fifty of its inhabitants, to the devil."

"Mactalla, you forget that time is precious," said his master.

"True, Signor, true; pray pardon me. Joy at the thoughts of being able to make our escape has put me nearly beside myself; but to lose no more time—You recollect, I dare say, the story I told you, as we travelled along, of the village of Tessino?"

"Perfectly," replied Osmond.

"Well, Signor, this is he, the identical person," laying, as he spoke, his hand upon the shoulder of his companion, "who innocently occasioned the destruction of its

inhabitants, my old acquaintance and good friend Felisco, as he has proved himself, by promising to deliver us, if possible, from this infernal place."

"Time does not permit me to explain," said Felisco, on Mactalla's pausing and motioning him to speak, "the circumstances which caused me to become an inmate here. Suffice it to say, Signor, they were such as, if known to you, (which, at some future period, if agreeable to you, they shall) would, I trust, in some degree, excuse my having done so, and prevent your feeling any unwillingness to trusting yourself to my guidance. Previous to your being brought hither, I was meditating my own escape, having long since sincerely repented my ever having associated with such wretches. To-morrow night will, I think, furnish a favourable opportunity for effecting this, and of course yours; as the whole of the gang, except such as are required to keep watch, and myself, owing to my pretending to have

have

have a sore leg, will be out, in consequence of information received from their scouts, of rich travellers being expected on the road. The care of the stables chiefly devolves on me; and as the lawn is enclosed, I frequently turn out the horses not immediately required, and let them remain there all night: so that as I shall do this to-morrow, we shall find no difficulty in procuring them. Our principal one will arise from the centinels, of whom there are never less than seven, three to go the rounds of the castle on the inside, two on the outside, and two to keep watch at the portal at the outer court."

"No matter, no matter," eagerly exclaimed Osmond; "for the prize in view there is no hazard too great to run; but tell me—tell me, my friend, do you think the other prisoners will be liberated by that time?"

"Liberated!" repeated Felisisco, in accents indicative of surprise; "I understand

you not, Signor. What put it in your head that they were to be liberated?"

Osmond hastily informed him.

"Alas! Signor," in reply, said Felisco, "they are grossly imposed upon: beyond those walls there is not the remotest hope of their ever getting."

"How!" cried Osmond, almost aghast with horror, "imposed upon, say you?"

"Yes, most grossly, I repeat: but compose yourself, Signor, and I'll briefly explain what I mean. Know, then, that the banditti of this place, instead of immediately putting to death those who are so unfortunate as to fall into their hands, as most of the fraternity do, generally bring them hither prisoners, for the purpose of adding to their spoils, by extorting money from them as a ransom. Their mode is to procure a draft from them on some agent, relative, or banker, for as large a sum as they acknowledge the power of applying for, and which is always dated from some distant

distant town, and accompanied by a letter, calculated to prevent any suspicion of its being unfairly obtained. The moment information of this being honoured is obtained, the unhappy dupe from whom it was procured, under a positive assurance of its obtaining him his liberty, is sacrificed to the safety of the gang. You, Signor, ere this, would have been troubled for something of the kind, but that owing to my being more than commonly interested about you, in consequence of your connection with my friend Mactalla here, whom I recollected the instant I saw him in the wood, I told the Captain, from a conversation I overheard between you and your servant, I was well convinced, if he managed matters properly, he might prevail on you to join his troop."

"The execrable villain!" cried Osmond; "no wonder indeed he did not lay the unhappy family under any injunction of secresy as to his retreat, knowing, as he

did, that it was his intention never to let them escape from it. But, my friend," eagerly grasping the arm of Felisco, "cannot you devise some scheme to enable them to accompany us? Except you save them—except you contrive that they should be the companions of our flight, you need make no effort for my deliverance."

"By his Holiness's great toe, you know not what you require, Signor," somewhat impatiently returned Felisco; "one might almost as well attempt to run away with the Vatican as attempt to liberate those prisoners. Exactly at sun-set, a man goes up to see that the entrance to their apartments is secured in such a way as to put it out of the power of any one to give them egress from them, lest, if they obtained this, they should take it into their heads to ramble about the courts, and thus occasion the trouble of a search."

The despair into which this statement threw

threw him, now completely overcame Osmond. A film overspread his eyes, his ears rung with hollow murmurs, he staggered, and would have fallen, but for the quickness of Mactalla in catching him.

"The damps of this infernal place have made him ill," said Mactalla, as he supported him; "be quick, Felisco, in finishing what further you have to say, that he may leave it."

"No, no," cried Osmond, coming a little to himself, and raising his head from the shoulder of Mactalla,—“no, no,” wiping away the cold dew of sickness and dismay from his forehead, “’tis horror at the situation of the devoted prisoners. Tell me,” again addressing Felisco, “is there no other entrance but the one which I discovered, to their apartments?”

Felisco looked earnestly at him, but hesitated to reply.

“Oh, for Heaven’s sake!” supplicated Osmond in agony, “do not keep me in suspense.”

“Well, Signor, I acknowledge there is;

but the way to it lies through several apartments, difficult of access, and which have not for a long while been opened."

"No matter, no matter," cried Osmond, "furnish me but with the means of entering them, and I shall for ever bless you."

"Well, Signor, you shall be gratified. As soon as the return of the Captain to-morrow permits me to enter the room where all the keys not immediately wanted are deposited, I'll search for the ones you require, and bring them to you. Heaven grant you may succeed in your generous undertaking; but I much fear you will not, even though you should be able to penetrate these apartments—the entrance to the others, and which is at the further end of this suite, being a secret one, with the nature of which I am not acquainted."

"Well, well, no matter," replied Osmond, "it must be of singular construction indeed, if it escape the diligent search I shall make for it."

"At all events there's no use in playing the part of a raven, Felisco," observed
Mactalla,

Mactalla, fearful of the effect which being again plunged into despair might have upon his master.

“Nay,” interrupted Osmond, fearful Felisco might be piqued by this observation, “’tis natural for him to speak his apprehensions.”

“I gave utterance to them out of a good motive, I assure you, Signor—to prevent your disappointment being too great, should you be unfortunate enough to meet with one; if successful, depend upon it I’ll do every thing in my power to facilitate the accomplishment of your wishes.”

“Ten thousand thanks for your kindness,” said Osmond; “completely would it have lightened my heart, but for the unhappy beings in question. I will not, however, give way to despair about them. I have seen too many proofs of the goodness of Providence to permit me to doubt it in the present instance; if it be its will

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they

they should escape the impending danger, I know they will, though walls of brass, and hosts of armed men, encompassed them."

"No doubt," cried Felisco; "if we did not indeed place confidence in the goodness of Heaven, we should be ill able to bear many things that happen in life."—Then, after a transient pause, he added, as they had not any thing further of moment to converse on at present, they had better separate, lest a suspicion of their being together should be excited, and thus perhaps give rise to others that might be dangerous.

To the propriety of this measure, Osmond immediately assented; but at the same time enquired whether there was a necessity for his returning yet awhile to the house?

"By no means," Felisco replied, "as in the first place the night was here literally turned into day, and in the second, the
light

light in which he had represented him to the gang, left him at full liberty to pursue his inclination."

"He should then remain some time longer out," Osmond said, "as he was at present in too perturbed a state of mind to allow of his remaining quietly in one place."

"Very well, Signor, as you please," answered Felisco, taking, as he spoke, the arm of Mactalla, to make him accompany him to the hall, not conceiving it prudent to let him remain with his master.

"But that's true," said Osmond, suddenly recollecting the circumstance, and detaining Felisco a few minutes longer, in order to have it explained to him, "I nearly forgot to mention the alarm which some part of Mactalla's conduct in my chamber gave me."

He then related what this was; and in reply learnt, that, like Macbeth, he had seen but an ideal dagger; the instrument which he took for one in the hand of Mactalla

talla being but a key, entrusted to him by Felisco, for the purpose of admitting himself into a remote part of the building, in which he had appointed to meet him, after his interview with his master, and which, for the better securing, Mactalla had drawn from his bosom on approaching the bed, and accidentally held in his hand, while groping about it.

On emerging from the building, Osmond happening to cast his eyes on the opposite terrace, upon which the moon shone full at the moment, was not a little startled at beholding the wall of it completely covered with armed men, whose weapons all appeared levelled against himself and his party.

“Good Heavens!” he involuntarily exclaimed, “are we then betrayed? Yet if we are, what an extraordinary opinion must they have formed of us, to think it requisite to send such a number after us!”

“What do you mean, Signor?” asked Felisco, somewhat surprised.

“Mean!”

“ Mean ! ” repeated Osmond, pointing across the court.

“ What ! you are speaking of the gentlemen yonder ? ” pursuing the direction of his eye. “ Ah, Signor,” with a loud laugh, “ believe me you never set eyes on a more harmless set. In a word, Signor, they are made of what one has often reason to believe the human heart made of—stone, as a clearer light would at once have permitted you to see.”

Osmond could not help joining for a moment in the laugh, which both Mactalla and his friend enjoyed at his expence. They then separated.

Osmond, as soon as he was left to himself, proceeded to take the range of the solitary courts : but neither their stillness, nor yet the soft and shadowy light which prevailed throughout them, could impart a charm to soothe the anguish, to allay the agitation he experienced on account of the Raymonds. He continued wandering about like a troubled spirit, literally taking

no rest or note of time, until the grey dawn of the eastern clouds gradually began to redden: soon after which the trampling of horses announcing the approach of the banditti, induced him to seek out a remote spot to secrete himself in from their observation. As soon as he was convinced they had entered the hall, and that of course he need fear no interruption from them, he ventured from his hiding-place, and as he did, was struck with mingled astonishment and awe at the splendid scene, rendered still more so by the rising sun striking full upon it, which the great body of the inner castle, surrounded with fair semicircular towers, proudly swelling to the eye, and magnificently adorned with pinnacles, statues, and battlements, presented to his view.

But with the admiration it inspired was mingled that feeling of regret and sadness, which a mind of taste and sensibility involuntarily experiences at beholding any superb monument of art sinking into decay,
such

such as it was evident this noble edifice was hastening to. The ravages of time were every where discernible on it—long grass overtopped its battlements, dusky weeds crept round its arches, and heaps of rubbish strewed its courts.

“ Yes,” said Osmond, under the influence of the feeling just alluded to,

“ Tears to mortality are not confined,
The fate of things affect the human mind.”

“ But to this decay and desolation,” he continued, “ all the works of man, sooner or later, come ; yet a little while, and the pile sinks into the dust, after the hand that raised it ; the monument, which pride hoped would perpetuate its name for ever, drops into oblivion, like the name it was intended to record.”

From the contemplation of the building he strolled away to the magnificent woods that rose above it.

Fitter

Fitter haunts for meditation than were these, he could not possibly conceive—so impervious were their shades, so profound their solitude; a death-like stillness seemed to prevail throughout them; nor stroke of sturdy axe, nor woodman's cheerful carol, here met the listening ear; nor bleat of

——— “ Folded flocks penn'd in their wattled cot ;
Or sound of past'ral reed with oaten stops ;
Or whistle from the lodge ; or village cock.”

Here again the admiration of Osmond was excited, not only by the luxuriance of the trees, but the romantic bowers of fragrant and beautiful shrubs, which he found scattered amongst them, and the fine views they, through partial openings, admitted of the castle, which, notwithstanding its crumbling turrets, still, in every direction, “ wore a warlike mien,” an air of sullen grandeur, highly impressive.

“ As,

“ As, midst the snow of age, a boastful air
Still on the war-worn vet’ran’s brow attends;
Still his big bones his youthful prime declare,
Tho’ trembling o’er the feeble crutch he bends.”

Anxious to ascertain whether, if they failed effecting their escape one way, there was any chance of accomplishing it another, Osmond made his way, though not without the greatest difficulty, to the summit of one of these cliffs, whence a glance at the opposite side convinced him there was not the smallest, by discovering to his view an extensive lake.

At length he returned to the hall. The first object he beheld on entering it, was Felisco, who, hastily approaching him, said aloud—“ You have had a long, and I hope pleasant, ramble, Signor;” then, in a lower tone, “ I have got the keys—follow me.”

CHAP. IX.

“ He star’d, and roll’d his haggard eyes around.”

OSMOND joyfully obeyed. On getting some distance from the hall, Felisco stopt, and having looked about to see there was no one at hand to overhear them—“ I will myself attend you to the apartments,” cried he, “ as I find I shall not be wanted for some time.”

Osmond thanked him for his complaisance; and Felisco leading the way, they proceeded through several intricate passages to an immense folding-door, which throwing open, Osmond found himself in the rotunda they had previously visited: hence

hence they ascended the fan staircase to another door, which Felisco unlocking, discovered to the view of Osmond a magnificent apartment, which he styled the saloon, designed in the most elegant style of gothic architecture, and looking upon what had formerly been not only a spacious but delightful garden, and which still exhibited a beauty and richness highly attractive to the eye, and rendered still more so by the smiling contrast it formed to the dusky walls and battlements, begirt with ivy and long-streaming grass, which frowned above it.

From this apartment they entered a spacious drawing-room, which Felisco also had to unlock, and which they hastily passed through to a dining-room, the door of which, like those of the other apartments, was also secured.

Here, however, Felisco paused, and with something of the air of a master of the ceremonies—"Signor," said he, "if an admirer of ancient grandeur, I advise you to
look

look about you, as we proceed, since finer specimens of the kind than what this building affords can scarcely any where, I fancy, be met with."

"True," replied Osmond, "it is indeed altogether a noble pile. Pray can you inform me to whom it belonged, or the cause of its abandonment to its present possessors?"

"Not exactly, Signor; all I can inform you is, that it originally belonged to one of the first families in Italy—that its last legal possessors deserted it in consequence of some dreadful catastrophe that took place in it—and that some years after, during which it remained without an inhabitant, owing to the terror and disgust this catastrophe caused it to be regarded with, its then proprietor was commanded by government to destroy it, since he did not choose to make it his abode, lest otherwise its neighbourhood should be rendered dangerous, owing to the refuge it was calculated to afford to banditti,

ditti, from the loneliness and security of its situation. Instead, however, of obeying this command, he thought proper to dispose of the place to a man of a suspicious character; and with the purchase-money quitted the kingdom, lest accident should discover what he had done. But please Heaven, if I make my escape from it, I shall soon make known its being still in existence."

"What a useful lesson," involuntarily thought Osmond, "might this splendid ruin, and its approaching fate, afford to those who are too much attached to the parade of grandeur, and fix their principal happiness in the evanescent baubles of this life, since in it they would behold the inevitable end of all sublunary things, the vanity of ambition! Ah, little, in all probability, did the founder of this still stately fabric imagine, that the period would ever arrive in which its only inhabitants would be the wailing birds of night, and the savage destroyer of his own species."

But

But with the melancholy reflections it inspired, would have been intermingled a high degree of pleasure, but for the anxiety with which Osmond was at present tormented, and which, but that he saw he should have disappointed his conductor by such conduct, would have caused him to hurry on without attending to any thing he saw.

“This apartment,” rejoined Felisco, “is large enough to contain a troop of horse. What a hospitable spirit do these great rooms prove the people of former times possessed !”

Osmond could not avoid acknowledging it was one of the finest apartments he had ever seen, of the purest gothic, with niches and other ornaments, which rendered it a noble model of a great baron’s hall. Its present air of desolation, however, was chilling to the feelings. The furniture that still remained within it retained but faint vestiges of former splendor. The few pictures that yet hung upon its dusky walls,

walls, were dropping from their massy frames, and so defaced by time and neglect, that the subjects they represented could hardly be guessed at; and of shadows, with truth it might be said, but shadows remained.

To this succeeded several other apartments, equally worthy of observation, and ending in a spacious gallery, which they descended to a broad passage, lighted by a row of narrow pointed casements at each side, and terminated by a flight of black marble steps leading to the chapel.

This Felisco, from some pious scruples, declining to enter, he presented two keys to Osmond.—“The largest, Signor,” said he, “will give you admission to the chapel; the other belongs to a door you’ll discover on your right hand, immediately behind a stately monument, surrounded by a brass ballustrading, and which opens to a flight of stairs, that lead directly to the apartment in which the private entrance is, which Heaven grant you may succeed

in finding. Should you be so fortunate as to do so, desire your friends to hold themselves in readiness to join us at nine o'clock to-night; and take care to leave all the doors but the last adjoining the fan staircase, which secures the suit, unlocked."

Osmond promised to observe his instructions, and Felisco having premised that they might not meet again till the hour of escape, they parted.

Osmond found some difficulty in gaining admission to the chapel. At length its massy doors yielded to his efforts, and swinging back on their rusty hinges, disclosed to his view a scene of solemn grandeur, well calculated to inspire a religious dread, still every warring passion into peace, and dissipate all the gay images of an alluring world—thick trees encompassed it, thrusting their waving branches through its broken windows; moth-eaten banners hung suspended from many of its dusty pillars, proclaiming the tombs of warriors beneath,

beneath, “ now dreaming of wars no more ;” and further on, amidst its long drawn aisles, several rent up flags presented yawning chasms to the view—upon which Osmond scarcely cast his eyes, ere he shrunk back in horror and disgust, at the idea that flashed upon his mind of these being the places to which the robbers committed the remains of their murdered victims—of many an innocent, here mingling its ashes with those of its fell destroyer.

He readily found the door opening to the stairs, and unlocking it, ascended to a large apartment, not less desolate in its appearance than the others he had passed through. Round this he now eagerly went, in quest of the entrance he was so anxious to obtain ; but though nothing could exceed the diligence of his search, nothing of the kind met his view. At length, after pausing a few minutes in absolute despair, he cast his eyes upon a large statue in a corner of it. It instantly occurred to him this might conceal the object of his search ;

he accordingly approached it, and, though not without some difficulty, pushing it aside, discovered, to his unutterable transport, a large aperture, but, to his equal surprise, occupied at the moment by Mr. Raymond, muffled up exactly as he had seen him in the hall, and who instantly, as if struck by an invisible hand, fell prostrate to the floor, with something like an exclamation of terror.

“For Heaven’s sake, Sir,” cried Osmond, shocked as well as alarmed, and stooping, as he spoke, to raise him, “what is the matter? are you ill?”

“Ill!” groaned the other, in a voice scarce articulate, and resisting the effort Osmond made to assist him: “Oh that it was but illness I had to complain of! For what—what are the pangs of the body, compared to those of the mind? Gracious Heaven!” he continued, with encreasing vehemence, “is then the dreaded hour of retribution arrived? and, to aggravate, to render complete its horrors, is he—he,
now

now beside me, the instrument thou hast fixed on to avenge thee? Oh, is there no shelter for this head? no hope to cling to?"

"I entreat, I conjure you, Sir," said Osmond, cruelly alarmed at the idea of all his benevolent intentions respecting the unfortunate man and his family being defeated by the desertion of his reason, for to this—to sudden madness, he imputed the speech he had just uttered—"to compose yourself."

"What!" in a tone of the most malignant bitterness, but without raising his head from the ground, "to give you an opportunity of gratifying your revenge, by the renewal of my tortures?"

"Revenge!" repeated Osmond. "Pray try to recollect yourself, Sir. What revenge, stranger as you are to me, can you possibly have given rise to in my bosom? But perhaps you mistake me for some other—for one of the wretches into whose power you have so unfortunately fallen:

if so, the ladies certainly did not do me the honour of mentioning me to you ; for it was in their power to have informed you who I was."

" They did not omit doing so ; but nevertheless I cannot help having——"

" Some doubts to my prejudice," hastily and with involuntary haughtiness, interrupted Osmond.

" I believe so : but swear to me, on your word, your honour, your immortal soul, you do not belong to the banditti, and perhaps I may give credit to your assertions."

" In any other situation than the present, be assured, Sir, your doubting them would have prevented their being repeated ; but now pity and humanity predominate over offended pride. I therefore protest to you, by my hopes of happiness here and hereafter, I am in the same predicament here that you are yourself. But actions are the best proofs of a man's sincerity : know then, therefore, Sir, that
I made

I made my way to this forlorn apartment solely for the purpose of endeavouring to gain access to yours, and thus rescue you from the dreadful fate impending over you."

"What! is your hand then not armed with a dagger to pierce my heart? Are you really then not deputed to take vengeance on me?—on me, the——"

"You shock me beyond expression, Sir," cried Osmond, "by continuing to speak in such a manner. Again I implore you (in the most energetic, the most vehement manner, as if it was for his very life he was pleading, he proceeded) to try and compose yourself. If you have any regard for yourself, your family, endeavour to collect your thoughts. The present moments are infinitely too precious to be wasted in useless arguments or idle exclamations, since they are the only ones that promise to afford an opportunity of imparting circumstances to you absolutely essential to your safety to know."

“ Indeed ! ” exclaimed the other, in a somewhat more collected tone ; and immediately rising, but with his face covered with his handkerchief, he turned towards the wainscot, and leaning against it, motioned Osmond to proceed.

Osmond obeyed—briefly acquainting him with the deception practised on him, and the method adopted for his deliverance.

“ What a monster ! ” cried Mr. Raymond, after listening to him with the most profound attention, but without once turning his face towards him ; “ but how ridiculous to rail at a villain, for proving himself a villain ! ” Then, in a calmer tone, but still with his face averted—“ And is it possible you can be anxious for my safety ? ”

“ Good Heavens ! ” impatiently exclaimed Osmond ; “ after what I have done, what a question ! Excuse me, Sir, for telling you, you must instantly, if you wish
to

to profit by the exertions I have made for you, collect yourself."

"Pardon me," said Mr. Raymond, in an altered tone; "the question was occasioned by astonishment at your being so interested about me—me, of whom you have had so much reason to—to—of whom you have no knowledge, I mean," added he, as if confused.

"True, Sir," replied Osmond, "I have no knowledge of you, at least that I am conscious of; but he must have a narrow heart indeed, who can only feel interested for those he knows. God forbid the charity of mine was so circumscribed! You are a stranger to me, 'tis true; but you are my fellow-being, and that is quite sufficient to give you a claim upon my best exertions."

"Which I accept with gratitude. At nine o'clock, you say, I may expect a summons from you."

"Exactly, if nothing unexpected occurs, which Heaven forbid. At all events,

rely on it, no risque shall deter me from trying to serve you."

He then entreated him to gloss over, as much as possible, to the ladies, the unpleasant circumstances he had unfolded to him, and to be cautious about speaking loud.

"My dear young friend," returned Mr. Raymond, in quite a different voice to what he had before spoken in, one which proved his being now quite collected, "be assured there is but little occasion to give a man a caution when his own safety is concerned."

He then acknowledged, but still without looking at Osmond, to the great surprise of the latter, that a suspicion of foul play had induced him to seek for a way of quitting his apartment, in hopes, if he discovered such, it would enable him to effect his deliverance.

All matters being now arranged between him and Osmond, he retreated to his prison; and Osmond, after he had, for fear of accidents,

accidents, replaced the statue, retraced his way to the fan staircase. As he slowly pursued this, his eyes involuntarily wandering about, he accidentally espied a light closet off of one of the apartments. Curiosity induced him to enter it, and he found it strewn over with written papers: as he glanced over these, he discovered a small roll of manuscript: he took it up, and, unrolling a little of it, found it written in Italian. He ran over a few lines, and had his curiosity so strongly excited by these, as to be induced to deposit it in his pocket.

From the rotunda he immediately repaired to his chamber, there to remain till evening. The nearer it approached, spite of all his efforts to the contrary, the more agitated he became.

But not to fears for himself, but for the Raymonds, was owing the violent perturbation of his spirits. All his efforts to save them might be ineffectual, he re-

flected; and his soul sickened at the bare surmise.

“Gracious Heaven!” he exclaimed, as he involuntarily thought on the fair Cordelia, “can human form enshrine a heart capable of meditating her destruction! But whatever be her fate in this mansion, I will share it.”

To the impression she had made upon him, may perhaps be imputed the deep interest he took in her fate, and that of her parents. But no—to ascribe it solely to such a cause, would be to do him injustice, since it originated in the tenderness and compassion of his nature, and would have been the same though he had not seen her, from the concern his disposition ever induced him to take in the troubles and disasters of his fellow-creatures, especially such as were really brought on by misfortune, to be charged upon no fault or indiscretion of the sufferer. In calamities of this description, there always appeared something

something so interesting to him, that at the first glance he generally made them his own, and that not altogether from a reflection of their being such as he might have experienced, or still experience, but chiefly from a certain generosity and sensibility of soul, which disposed him to compassion, abstracted from all considerations of self. In a word, when any thing of the kind came within his knowledge, his mind became captive at once; and surrendered itself to all the tender emotions of pity and regret.

Heavily wore away the hours he was destined to pass by himself. At length the sinking of the sun behind the tall trees of the forest announced the one at hand in which he expected Felisco. He was punctual to his appointment, and came accompanied by Mactalla.

“Well, Signor,” he softly exclaimed, as soon as the door was closed, “the gang set off at the time I expected.”

“And

“ And ever since,” cried Mactalla, “ we have been busied in overcoming some of our difficulties, by making the guards at the outer portal drunk. Praise be to St. Benedict, we did not find it a very troublesome undertaking; and now they lie, bound hand and foot, as cosy as possible, in a dungeon of one of the towers, where they may roar long enough before any one in this part of the building can hear them: but lest the devil should drive some one towards them, we had better, as every thing is now ready for our escape, not defer it.”

“ Assuredly,” returned Osmond; “ and now let me inform you that I was successful in discovering the private entrance I went in search of this morning, and that our fellow-prisoners are prepared to join us the moment we call upon them.”

“ Signor,” said Felisco, in a grave voice, and with a clouded countenance, “ I am, I assure you, extremely anxious for their deliverance;

deliverance ; but notwithstanding, cannot help thinking, from certain reflections that have occurred since we parted this morning, that it is adviseable for us to leave them behind."

"Leave them behind!" repeated Osmond, in an accent of horror.

"Yes, Signor, owing to the danger that will attend their accompanying us in our flight."

"Danger!" said Osmond, again echoing his words, and with a keenly-enquiring glance.

"Yes, Signor, danger. In a few minutes a man will repair to their apartment with supper ; and should he find any difficulty in obtaining admission, or not perceive them in it at the first glance, measures will immediately be taken, that in all probability will prevent our escape."

"Why are we not armed?" demanded Osmond.

"Because, Signor, 'tis not in our power

to procure arms, the Captain having the key of the armory in his own possession. All things, therefore, taken into consideration, I really think, Signór, you had better leave those unhappy strangers to their fate."

"No, by Heaven!" exclaimed Osmond, in the most impassioned tone, and with uplifted hands and eyes, as if calling upon Heaven to attest his vow, "No! though I even was not as much interested about them as, from knowing them, I am, since to abandon them, after the hopes I have inspired, the dangers I have unfolded, would make me look upon myself as a greater wretch than any one of the monsters who have imprisoned them. 'But think not,' he added, perceiving Felisco look alarmed, "that it is my intention to involve you in any danger on their account. I will myself take their place in the tower; and by answering the centinel, in a feigned voice, trust I shall prevent any of the consequences you apprehend. For fear of the worst, however, delay

delay not a moment making your escape, after they have joined you; and as soon as I think you are beyond these dangerous walls, I will endeavour to accomplish mine: but remember, I positively interdict your waiting longer for me than fifteen minutes; if by the expiration of that time, I am not with you, depend on it something unforeseen has occurred, and act accordingly."

"Oh, my dear master!" cried Mactalla, sobbing, "I cannot think of leaving you—cannot think of your running the risk of your life, for people who are, as one may say, perfect strangers to you."

"I am determined," said Osmond; "and equally determined that, in the present instance, no one shall run any risk but myself. Do not despond, however, my good fellow," added he, looking gratefully at Mactalla; "I ever have, and ever shall, believe that an especial Providence watches over the safety of those who incur danger
through

through motives of benevolence: but come, these precious minutes are fleeting fast," taking up the lamp, which Felisco had set on the table, as he spoke, and desiring him to lead on to the fan staircase.

"Here," cried he, as soon as the door opening into the suite of apartments this led to was unlocked, "wait for me, my friends. I'll take care you shall not be detained long."

He accordingly hurried forward, and was pleased to find Mr. Raymond and his family anxiously waiting his approach in the chamber communicating with the tower. He briefly explained the way they were to go, and bade them be as expeditious as possible.

Mr. Raymond, on receiving his instructions, kissed his hand to him, with an air of the greatest impatience; and taking the lamp from him with one hand, and that of his daughter with the other, moved on—but Mrs. Raymond lingered.

"Are

"Are you not coming with us?" asked she, in an anxious tone, and with a corresponding look.

"I will follow you, Madam," replied Osmond, somewhat evasively.

"Nay, I would much rather not proceed without you. I——"

"Mrs. Raymond, I am astonished how you can be so ridiculous," in an angry voice, exclaimed Mr. Raymond, and pausing for an instant.

"Go on, go on, Madam, I conjure you," cried Osmond; "trust me, in a few minutes I hope we shall be mutually congratulating one another on our fortunate escape from this den of thieves."

Mrs. Raymond, but with evident reluctance, obeyed; and the moment she was out of sight, Osmond, stepping through the aperture, took possession of the apartment she had vacated.

Scarcely had he done so, when he heard several violent efforts made to open the door, which he had bolted on the inside,
and

and directly after a hoarse voice vociferating—"What ho! Signor, what the devil have you done to the door, that I can't open it?"

"I have bolted it," replied Osmond, imitating, as nearly as he could recollect, the tones of Mr. Raymond, "as the ladies, being fatigued, are undressing to lay down."

"Well, I shall wait quietly a few minutes longer, and then I shall hope you'll admit me, as I am in a d—mnd hurry to go to my supper."

"Oh, why," involuntarily thought Osmond, with a heart swelling with indignation, "why does the known justice of the Supreme Being permit him to let such wretches as these exist? Why sleeps the thunder idle in His hand, when it could so easily blast them?"—He started, he recollected himself—"Forgive," he cried, "O forgive! Thou, whose ways experience and observation never fail of justifying, the involuntary reflection of a disturbed mind.

mind. This life would not be the state of discipline it is—such as, for the improvement of our nature, 'tis requisite for us all to pass through—but for the mixture of bad men with good in society. The crimes of the former bring forward the virtues of the latter—all those suffering virtues, which otherwise would have no field for action; and by the exercise of which the human character is not only tried and purified, but acquires some of its chief honours. Were there no bad men in the world to harass and distress the good, the good might appear in the light of harmless innocents, but could have no opportunity of displaying fidelity, magnanimity, patience, and fortitude; one half of virtue, and that not the least important half, would be lost to the world, since, in our present imperfect state, any virtue that is not exercised, is in danger of becoming extinct. If goodness constantly proceeded in a smooth and flowery path—if, meet-
ing

ing with no adversity to oppose it—if it was surrounded on every side with acclamation and praise—would there be no ground to dread its being corrupted by vanity, or sinking into indolence?”

Here his reflections were interrupted by the ruffian at the door exclaiming still more impatiently than before—“ Why, Signor, I say, an’t the ladies undressed yet? If I am kept much longer here, the capon I have brought for their supper will be quite cold, and, what is worse, the fellow of it, which I have prepared for my own. Come, come, Signor (thundering at the door), admit me, I say.”

“ Have patience for a few minutes longer, I beg,” said Osmond. Then, pursuing the thread of his reflections—“ Yes,” cried he, mentally, “ ’tis necessary this dangerous calm should be disturbed; the waters must be troubled, lest they should stagnate and putrify.”

“ Why, Signor, holle ! again, I say,”
cried

cried the ruffian, "are the ladies ill, that they are so silent? I have not heard them speak since I have been here."

"They are not always disposed for conversation," returned Osmond.

"For women, that's a wonder I am sure," returned the other, with a loud laugh. Then, in a more brutal tone—"Let them be disposed for what they may, I shall wait here no longer: so, Signor, if you do not immediately unbolt the door, I shall make free to burst it open."

"Patience another minute, I implore you," said Osmond.

"Patience to the devil," returned he, and Osmond heard him apply his foot to the door.

To defer, therefore, another minute making his escape, was not to be thought of; and besides, by this time, he flattered himself his friends had effected theirs. Accordingly, he hurried from the apartment, and hastily traversing the others he had to
cross,

cross, carefully locked the door which enclosed the suite, and, passing the fan staircase, descended by another to the hall.

To his inexpressible joy he found it unoccupied. He darted forward, and gaining the door, made an eager effort to open it; but how impossible to paint his anguish, his emotion, at finding it resist this effort—at finding it locked, and the key taken out.

For an instant he was overpowered by the greatness of the shock this untoward circumstance gave him. Then recollecting himself—recollecting that fortitude and coolness might do something, despair and agitation nothing, he looked around him to try whether he could perceive any other outlet by which to escape, but without being able to discover any thing of the kind, the windows being all too high to admit a hope of effecting it that way, and the doors leading into passages, of the intricacies of which he was too well apprized
to

to be able to suppose he could make his way through them.

While considering what he should do, a small door, at no great distance from the principal one, and which he had not before noticed, owing to its being made to resemble a pannel, flew open, and a man rushing in from the court, slapt it to, and set his back against it.

Osmond involuntarily started, and was retreating towards the nearest passage, as the only means of avoiding, he conceived, immediate destruction, when his steps were arrested by the ruffian exclaiming—"Ho, what is that you, Ossuna? Curse me if I can well see, I have got such a confounded giddiness in my head: would you believe it (hiccougging violently), the hall seems dancing round me."

The fainting spirits of Osmond revived; he perceived the ruffian was in a state of complete intoxication, and flattered himself, from this circumstance, he should one

way or other be able to render him subservient to his escape.

Accordingly, collecting himself, and retiring behind one of the pillars—"And prythee to what may that giddiness be owing?" asked he, imitating the gruff tone of Ossuna, which he perfectly recollected.

"You comical dog," cried the other, half laughing, half hiccoughing, "to as natural a cause as any in the world—to that jolly rogue Felisco, and his friend Mactalla, our new comrade, having prevailed on me to assist them in emptying too many flasks of Burgundy. I tell you what, Ossuna, I can see clearly we shall have rare doings here in future, from the companions we have lately got. By the Lord, if there be not a good vintage next year, we shall be in a bad way, for our cellars will soon be low, I'm certain; and no wonder—since such wine as they contain would make even a Mussulman drink—but

what the devil are you doing there, stuck up against that dusty pillar?"

"I may as well ask what you are doing at that door? Take my advice, and as your head is giddy, sit down."

"Ah, you dog, ask me to leave my post! But no, I shan't leave it."

"What! not to assist in emptying another flask?"

"Ah, you unconscionable dog!" hic-coughed the other.

"No, I deny being unconscionable," returned Osmond; "consider I was not of your party with Felisco."

"True, true, that's very true, comrade, and therefore I retract my words. Yes, yes, I see you are not unconscionable; and so, d'ye see, as soon as I can get one of the rascals from above to take my post here, I am your man."

CHAP. X.

“ Great minds, like Heav’n, are pleas’d with doing good,
Tho’ the ungrateful subjects of their favours
Are barren in return. Virtue does still
With scorn the mercenary world regard ;
Where abject souls do good, and hope reward :
Above the worthless trophies men can raise,
She seeks not honours, wealth, nor airy praise ;
But with herself, herself the goddess pays.” }

ROWE’S TAMERLANE.

“ STUFF, stuff!” somewhat impatiently,
said the pretended Ossuna; “ don’t you
trouble your head, man, about that door;
I’ll take care of it for you.”

“ You! thank you: but I’ll not quit
my post until I am regularly relieved; for
that rascal Tivoli owes me a grudge, and
would

would be glad, I know (hiccoughing), to have an opportunity of doing me an injury with our Captain."

"But why can't I relieve you as well as he?"

"You! why d—mn it, Ossuna, you sly dog, you must to a certainty have been taking a flask too much yourself, to ask me such a question. You stupid dolt, don't you know that you are appointed cook this night, and have to prepare supper against the troop returns?"

"Ah, true, true; but pray, comrade, can you inform me why the great door, contrary to usual custom, is locked to-night?"

"Yes, yes, I'll tell you all about that. As I was taking my rounds as usual, like a careful watchman as I am, I spied the key on the outside; but how the devil it came there, is more than I can inform you, or puzzle my head to guess, but so it was. Ha, ha! said I, as soon as I saw it, this does not look right; so I whipt it out, and put

it into my pocket: here it is," producing a tremendous key.

"Yes, so I perceive; but had you not better return it to the door? for it must be cumbersome, and besides may otherwise be mislaid."

"No, comrade, no," provokingly thrusting it again into his pocket, "I shall keep it till the Captain comes back, to convince him that though I do now and then do what he accuses me of—take a cheerful glass or so, I never inundate my brains sufficiently to prevent my knowing what I am about."

To the consternation of Osmond, the alarm-bell now rang out.

"Hey-day, why what the devil's the matter," exclaimed the other, after listening a minute, with a vacant stare; "surely the rascals in the north tower, and their prisoners, can't be scuffling; but if so, one should think they might do without ringing for assistance."

"But I suppose they can't," said Osmond;

mond; "you had better, therefore, hasten to them."

"Hasten! hasten! to quit my post! d—mn me, Ossuna, if you desire me to do so again, but I shall suspect you of some foul design."

Voices now sounded at no great distance.

"Nay then," said Osmond to himself, "nothing but a desperate effort remains for me."

He accordingly rushed upon the ruffian, and seizing him by the collar, dragged him from the door, but was prevented retreating through it by his, in his turn, also seizing him. A violent struggle now took place between them, the villain being uncommonly athletic, and besides not so stupidly drunk as not to guess the intentions of Osmond, on finding himself collared by him, and perceiving that he was not the person he supposed.

Desperation, however, nerving the arm of Osmond, he at length succeeded in get-

ting him to the ground ; but at the same instant had the mortification of having one of his legs seized by him. The eyes of Osmond kindled, his breathing became nearly suspended, he stooped, and pulling from the girdle of the wretch one of the pistols with which it was stuck, held it in a threatening attitude to his head.

This action had the desired effect—he was immediately released ; and hastening to the door, passed out, and turned the key.

He speedily gained the vaulted passage in the outer court ; but scarcely had he done so, ere he paused in consternation at perceiving two shadows at the entrance, which gradually retiring as he advanced, led him to imagine he was in danger of being waylaid within it. This horrible surmise made him stand for a minute in suspense before it. An exulting shout, and the steps of pursuit behind him, then again urged him forward. As he proceeded, a heap of rubbish obstructed the path, and
caused

caused him to stumble: on recovering himself, he distinguished the panting of his pursuers. Still, however, he pressed forward, though now almost hopeless of reaching the wished-for goal. At length it appeared in sight; but at the same instant two men darted to it from a recess in the wall. He now gave himself up for lost, and, pausing, felt the skirt of his coat instantly seized behind. The effort, however, that was made to drag him back was rendered abortive by the still more violent one that, at the same moment, was made by these two men to drag him forward. They succeeded in theirs; and, hastily clapping to the portal against the ruffians, who were rushing after them, locked it, and flung away the key.

“Now we are safe, we are safe,” shouted Mactalla, in a transport of joy, and who, together with his friend Felisco, had thus ventured to the assistance of Osmond, his delay in joining them having excited dread-

ful apprehensions for his safety ; “ blessed be St. Benedict for your deliverance ! ”

“ I trust I never shall forget the gratitude I owe to Heaven for it,” said Osmond ; and hurrying over the drawbridge, he found, in a little sequestered glade among the trees, at the opposite side of the lawn, the Raymonds, together with the little French boy, whom Felisço had also contrived to get from the castle, and horses prepared for the whole party.

“ Thank Heaven,” in the most animated tone, exclaimed Mrs. Raymond, hastily advancing from beneath the deep shadow of the trees to meet Osmond the moment he appeared, “ we see you again in safety : had you fallen a victim to your too great generosity (for the risk you ran on our account has been explained to us), never, never would the liberty purchased at so dear a rate have afforded me happiness.”

Osmond bowed—to speak at the moment was not in his power, so deeply was he

he

he affected by this grateful acknowledgment, the recollection of all he had lately gone through, of all he had been instrumental in preventing.

“ Stuff! stuff!” exclaimed Mr. Raymond, following her steps with his daughter, and in a tone indicative of high displeasure; “ this is no time for compliments.”

“ We certainly should not linger here,” said Felisco; “ for there is no knowing the moment when some of the banditti may return.”

“ And again I say,” cried Mr. Raymond, thereby implying they had been arguing the point before, “ the direct road to Naples is the one we must take.”

“ My God, Sir,” said Felisco, in the most impatient accent, “ have I not already explained to you the reasons which should deter us from taking that—explained to you, that to a certainty that is the one in which we shall be pursued by the banditti, the other being so intricate and tedious;

N 6

that

that they'll never dream of our having chosen it?"

"And pray," in the haughtiest voice imaginable, "do you think I troubled myself to attend to your stupid explanations? Again I say, the straight road to Naples is the only one I will take."

"Then, by all the saints in the calendar, you must find your way to it yourself; for curse me," cried Felisco, not a little exasperated by the supercilious manner in which he had been treated by him, "if I hazard my life, to gratify your whim in conducting you to it."

"Pray, pray," supplicated his lady, "be persuaded to give up a determination so inimical to our safety. I shall die with terror if you persist in it, after the danger I have heard of its being likely to expose us to."

"Do, my dear father, do," entreated his lovely daughter, but in a trembling voice, and attempting, as she spoke, to clasp his
arm,

arm, which, however, she was prevented doing, by his rudely, or rather brutally, pushing her from him.

Osmond, recovering from the emotion which had for an instant impeded his utterance, could no longer refrain from interfering.

“Pardon me, Sir,” said he, addressing himself to Mr. Raymond, but in a tone expressive of the indignation his obstinacy, insolence, and inhumanity had excited, “for acknowledging myself amazed at your conduct—amazed that, at a moment like the present, you can yield to any other feelings than those of benevolence.”

“And pray, Sir,” haughtily inquired the other, “what is there in my conduct so amazing? Is it my not attending to idle arguments on one hand, and silly fears on the other, that occasions you such surprise?”

“It is your not regarding just arguments and natural fears, Sir,” replied Osmond, in a tone not less haughty than his own,
“which

“ which so astonishes and disgusts me, and now induces me to tell you, in a more peremptory manner than I could have wished to have done, that the road which our deliverer here (pointing to Felisco) wishes us to pursue, is the only one that shall be taken.”

“ Shall !” repeated the other, drawing back, and evidently swelling with rage and resentment ; “ permit me, Sir, to inform you, this is a kind of language I have not been accustomed to hear.”

“ Nor I to use, Sir,” cried Osmond ; “ but never, when convinced, as in the present case, that I am right, shall my language be less decisive.”

“ Oh drop, for Heaven’s sake, this altercation,” said Mrs. Raymond, drawing nearer to him ; “ while arguing in this manner, we may be surprised : and how, how then would you have to reproach yourself,” she added, looking earnestly at him, “ since to you alone would our being so be owing ?”

“ Prepare

“ Prepare the horses, Felisco,” said Osmond; “ another minute must not be wasted.”

The horses were immediately brought forward; and Miss Raymond being nearer to him at the moment than her mother, he first offered her his hand to assist her in mounting. Her accepting it, however, was prevented by her father rudely interposing between them. He seized her hand himself—“ And we have already occasioned you so much trouble, Sir,” cried he, Osmond could not help thinking in a sneering tone, “ that any services my daughter may require, I shall render her myself.”

Osmond, with a slight inclination of his head, immediately drew back, so piqued, so irritated, as to resolve from that moment to hold no further converse with this ungrateful man and his family.

“ 'Tis by means of such characters as his,” said he, mentally, as with a heart swelling with offended pride and just indignation

dignation—he turned from him, “that the mind by degrees is rendered callous to the pleadings of humanity, and men acquire a misanthropical turn. I will, therefore, shun, diligently shun, such, whenever they come across my path, in order to avoid the perversion of my feelings, the destruction of all the social charities of my nature, from the exercise of which man derives his highest enjoyment.”

As he stood adjusting the bridle of his horse, he felt his arm gently pressed behind; and turning round, beheld Mrs. Raymond at his elbow.

“You are offended,” said she, “I see you are offended; if you continue so, I shall be quite unhappy. Oh, if you could look into my heart, you would there (she added, in the most energetic tone) discover sentiments which would, I make no doubt, appease your, I acknowledge, just resentment—you would then find, that ingratitude is not the vice of all. Yet let me not say ingratitude—no, no, ’tis from
pettishness

pettishness the expressions dropt which offended you."

Osmond, who knew not what it was in his own bosom to involve the innocent with the guilty, perpetuate the memory of injuries, or keep alive the flame of resentment, warmly, though respectfully, pressed her hand between his, and conjured her (the cloud of passion vanishing from his brow, and his fine countenance regaining all its wonted openness) to think no more of what had passed, assuring her he should give it no place in his remembrance.

"A thousand; thousand thanks," cried she, in the most grateful accent, "for this assurance."

Then permitting him to lead her to her horse, he assisted her on it; and the party set off, Felisco leading the way, and Osmond and Mactalla bringing up the rear.

The intricacies and difficulties of the way they deemed it expedient to pursue, the expedition they were anxious to make,
and

and the agitation they were naturally in, precluded all further conversation for some time. At length, after a long silence, Mactalla motioned to his master to slacken his speed a little, and upon his obeying—"By St. Benedict," cried he, in a low voice, "but you risked your life, Signor, for a bad man," pointing, as he spoke, to Mr. Raymond, who rode close to his daughter, and apparently regardless of all but her and himself. "Would you believe it?—that ungrateful villain (for he deserves no other appellation) wanted Felisco and me not to wait for you, saying he was certain you could not escape, and at all events, whether you did or not, it was not fair that so many persons should endanger their lives for the sake of one."

"Gracious Heaven!" exclaimed Osmond, in a tone of horror, "is it possible?"

"Why, Signor, I wouldn't try to make the devil himself appear blacker than he really is; but I don't wonder at your al-
most

most doubting what I have told you, since to be sure it seems almost incredible that any man should be vile enough to disregard the safety of the person who was risking it on their account ; and by the Powers I made no bones of telling him so : if ever he got a good dressing, he got it from Felisco and me."

" And the ladies," anxiously demanded Osmond, " were they equally uninterested about me ?"

" They ! Oh, blessings on them, not at all. If you had been the nearest and dearest friend they had in the world, they couldn't have felt more for you than they seemed to do. His lady, though I am sure she is afraid of him, and no wonder, for I am certain he is a tyrant in his heart, made no scruple of reproaching him for his cruelty and ingratitude, in thinking of serving you in such a manner ; and as to his daughter, her pretty eyes never shed so many tears before, I dare say ; for at first, both
she

she and her mother appeared apprehensive of our acting as he wished."

"Well, for the honour of human nature, I am glad to hear they do not resemble him," said Osmond; "I will hope and believe, in order to prevent my being disgusted with it, that but few could be found who do."

"And moreover, Signor," rejoined Mac-talla, "it was he to a certainty that turned the key in the hall door; but whether owing to accident or design, I cannot pretend to say."

"Oh, most assuredly to accident," returned Osmond, with quickness; "for what motive could he possibly have for wishing my destruction?"

"Why, that's true, Signor; that's a question I have asked myself; and as I cannot answer it in a satisfactory manner, I am inclined to think as you do in this instance. Heaven knows it was bad enough his thinking so little of you, without
doing

doing any thing he thought could injure you."

To this observation Osmond only replied by shaking his head; and again they rode on in silence.

Previous to this information, Osmond had been endeavouring to reason himself out of the prejudice he had conceived against Mr. Raymond, in consequence of his haughty and obstinate deportment, by reflecting, that the best of men had frequently contradictory qualities in their dispositions, and at times acted in so strange and unaccountable a manner, as completely to shadow all their virtues; and besides that, great allowances should be made for a person situated as he understood him to be—not only compelled to quit his native country, but in all probability tortured by remorse for the act which had obliged him to do so. . But now any longer to combat against this, he found to be impossible; and so strong, so decided did it become, that,

that, but for the consideration of his amiable companions, he would have had no hesitation in resolving from this moment to keep entirely apart from him.

From any ostentatious display of gratitude for the service he had rendered him, the risk he had run on his account, he would have shrunk embarrassed and distressed; but some faint appearance of it would have been gratifying to his feelings, from the proof it would have afforded of his generosity not having been exercised for an unworthy character.

Though his resentment against Mr. Raymond could not be subdued, it was much allayed when he reflected on the pain his conduct towards him evidently gave his wife and daughter; and on their account, as much as possible, he resolved on concealing his feelings: on the latter by degrees his thoughts solely turned; and with a transport impossible to be described, he dwelt on the idea of the deliverance he
had

had afforded her, or rather on the idea of the sentiments it had perhaps excited in her bosom for him.

Quickly, however, did the delicious sensations inspired by the idea of these yield to the recollection of the obstacles which want of fortune threw in the way of a union with her ; and again he accused himself of selfishness, for wishing to inspire her, or deriving pleasure from the thoughts of having done so, with sentiments of a tender nature for him—again resolved to punish himself for so doing, by having no further communication with her than was absolutely necessary.

CHAP. XI.

“ Disdain has swell’d him up——
Sullen and dumb, and obstinate to death,
No signs of pity in his face appear:
Cramm’d with his pride, he leaves no room within
For sighs to issue out, or love to enter in.”

JUST as day began to dawn, the party emerged from the confines of the forest, and crossing a plain, thinly dotted with trees, entered upon a valley of considerable extent, bounded by and winding a way something like a meandering river, amongst mountains of various size and form ; some, from their frightful chasms and gloomy caverns, shagged with thorn, and shaded with the darkest foliage, appeared only fit haunts for

for the prowling wolf, or midnight sons of plunder—others, with gentler aspect, rose from the vale; here, clad with stately forests, there, swelling into grassy hillocks, or sinking into dells, o’erthtopped by towering and projecting rocks, the grey tints of which were beautifully contrasted by the bright verdure of the pines that waved over them, and the silvery rills that trickled down their sides, as if to nourish the moss and wild plants with which they were tufted. Here mountain torrents were seen rushing down stupendous precipices, now disappearing amidst tangled thickets, then again bursting on the view, in a sheet of foam, as if eager to gain the tranquil mazes of the vale beneath, where aromatic shrubs and flowers intermingled their beauties, and gave new sweetness to the breath of morning.

As the rising sun gradually unfolded this scenery to the view of the travellers, the heart of Osmond swelled with gratitude to Him who had given him again to hail the

glories of the opening day in safety, and gaze again, without fear or molestation, on the extensive landscape.

Revived by the balmy freshness of the air, cheered by the matin hymns of unnumbered birds, and at every step contrasting his present with his recent situation, Osmond felt as if he had recovered all his wonted cheerfulness; till a glance at the fair Cordelia dissolved the enchantment which had soothed him into tranquillity, by reviving reflections of a painful and agitating nature.

They travelled without pausing till the morning was far advanced. Rest being then absolutely necessary for themselves and horses, and a convenient spot for the enjoyment of this presenting itself to the view, they alighted, and sought refuge in a luxuriant wood, on the brow of a hill, from the sultry heat of noon. It rose near the entrance of a far-extended plain, dotted with delicious groves of poplars, planes, and mulberries, and commanding
a prospect

a prospect boundless as human wishes. To the right a distant river rolled its navigable waters, enlivened by the fluttering sails of small vessels, and surmounted by successive ridges of intertwisted mountains, gradually fading into the clouds they seemed emulous to reach: to the left extended a vast tract of country, diversified in the most romantic manner, with hill and dale, fountain and fresh shade; and in front were detached woods, gradually sloping out of sight, and opening in various directions to richly-glowing landscapes.

Felisco, preceding the party, soon discovered an embowered retreat for the ladies,—

——— “ That, like Pomona’s arbour, smil’d,
With flow’rets deck’d, and fràgrant smells. The roof
Of thickest covert, was in woven shade,
Laurel and myrtle, and what higher grew,
Of firm and fragrant leaf. On either side
Acanthus, and each od’rous bushy shrub,
Fenc’d up the verdant wall: each beauteous flow’r,
Iris, all hues, roses, and jessamin,

Rear'd high their flourish'd heads between, and wrought
Mosaic; under foot the violet,
Crocus, and hyacinth, with rich inlay,
Broider'd the ground; more colour'd than with stone
Of costliest emblem. In shady bower,
More sacred or sequester'd, though but feign'd,
Pan or Sylvanus never slept, nor nymph
Nor Faunus haunted."

A murmuring brook ran near it, diffusing all around a grateful freshness; and the deep dark verdure of the trees was enlivened by the glowing beauties of the orange and the lemon, and the white blossoms of the almond and the myrtle.

On stopping, Osmond happening to be nearer to Miss Raymond than to any other of the party, he approached for the purpose of helping her to alight, but was again prevented rendering her any assistance, by her father, as he had before done, rushing between them.

All his angry feelings revived by this conduct. The moment he had handed Mrs. Raymond into this delightful retreat, he

he was retiring, when she prevented him, by catching his arm, and inviting him to take a seat beside her on a bank of verdant turf they found within it.

Numerous flocks, with their attendant shepherds, were scattered over the plain; and to these Mactalla and the French boy now repaired, to procure milk and fruit, while Felisco was employed in unpacking a basket of provisions he had taken care to bring with him from the castle.

Whilst thus busied, Mr. Raymond enquired, with an appearance of great anxiety, whether there was no village or habitation near, at which they could procure a carriage for the remainder of the journey, or at least a few additional attendants?

“No,” Felisco replied; “Venosa was the nearest place at which they could procure either, the present tract being solely inhabited by shepherds, too much occupied by their flocks to be prevailed on to
o 3 quit

quit them, though sufficiently generous, he knew from experience, to lend their assistance to any one immediately at hand."

Mr. Raymond then asked, how soon he thought they might reach Venosa? To which he answered, by night-fall, provided the horses were sufficiently refreshed to permit of their renewing their journey at sunset.

Mactalla and his companion presently returned with the refreshments they had gone for, which laying by the viands Felisco had already produced, they retired with him to a little distance from the harbour.

Mrs. Raymond now repeated her acknowledgments to Osmond for the generosity of his recent conduct; and by the obliging attentions she paid him, seemed anxious to manifest her gratitude.

Osmond, now at leisure to view her attentively, beheld in her countenance traces of the most perfect beauty; but, like the Marchesa Morati, though unpossessed of these,

these; she would still have been attractive, so prepossessing were her manners, so dignified her air and deportment.

Convinced, from the assurances of Felisco, that they were in perfect safety in their present situation, she entered into a cheerful conversation with Osmond, indicative at once of a liberal and accomplished mind, but in which neither her husband nor daughter participated; both sat behind her, and at some distance; and to the astonishment of Osmond, as he could not suppose he was under any apprehension of unpleasant consequences ensuing from his now being seen, the former still continued muffled up in such a manner, that not a feature was visible.

That his silence was premeditated, he made no doubt; but that the fair Cordelia's proceeded from aught but her dread of him, he could not imagine, owing to a glance or two, which, spite of the interposition of her father, he caught.

At the request of Mrs. Raymond, he

gave not only a succinct account of the manner in which he had fallen into the hands of the banditti, but of the circumstances to which his visiting Naples were owing. On his concluding—"Your narrative may with truth," said she, "be styled one of most disastrous chances—one too which has the singular effect of at once softening and strengthening the mind, since, while it affects the feelings, it inspires fortitude, by proving that there is no danger, no difficulty almost, which resolution and patience may not overcome."

She then, in her turn, informed him, that at the skirts of the wood in which he and his attendants had taken refuge from the storm, they had been surprised by the banditti, she could not help thinking owing to the treachery of their servants, as, though armed and numerous, they made not an effort to defend them, nor had one of them been seized by the troop.

At length Osmond arose and withdrew, in order to afford Mrs. Raymond and her
fair

fair daughter an opportunity of enjoying a little repose.

Lost in thought, he strolled further into the wood, without reflecting on the necessity there was for his endeavouring to obtain some himself. His dislike to Mr. Raymond strengthened, he almost believed, beyond the possibility of being subdued, owing to the unaltered coldness, or rather fastidiousness of his manner, and which he was again tempted to ascribe solely to an ungracious temper, too callous to feel gratitude, and too proud to acknowledge an obligation. But with the indignation and resentment he felt against him for his conduct was mingled something like pity ; for of how many exquisite enjoyments must his yielding to such a temper debar him, he thought—domestic pleasure, the consolations of friendship, the silent satisfaction resulting from the consciousness of being esteemed—yes, the man who harboured such a one could not fail (he inwardly exclaimed) of being an enemy to his own happiness.

At last, completely overpowered by fatigue, he threw himself at the root of an old tree, which dipt its trembling and far-extended boughs into a brook that babbled by, and gradually sunk into a transient slumber, lulled by the soft rustling of the foliage, and the ceaseless hum of swarming insects, not undelightful

“ To him who muses through the woods at noon;
Or drowsy shepherd, as he lies reclin’d,
With half-shut eyes, beneath the floating shade
Of willows grey, close crowding o’er the brook.”

From this he awoke refreshed, and retracing his way to the bower, stopt within some yards of it, in consequence of seeing Miss Raymond seated near the brow of the hill, beneath the shade of some tall and clustering trees: her back was towards him, and she appeared buried in thought.

What would he not have given at the moment to have been able to have looked into her heart, as Ariel was into that of Belinda’s?

A fear

A fear of appearing intrusive—that modesty which is generally reckoned the companion of genuine love, and certainly always of sensibility—withheld him from approaching her: but though he was able to resist the impulse which would have led him to her side, he was not able to prevail on himself to quit a spot where, without incurring the imputation of impertinence, he could indulge himself in gazing on her—but the pleasure he derived from this was not unalloyed, as he silently observed her, and involuntarily reflected on the happiness the man must enjoy, who should call such a treasure his. He also reflected, his thoughts recurring to the apparent sternness of her father, on the probability there was of her not experiencing herself the felicity she was so capable of bestowing, and deserving of possessing—he sighed at the idea—sighed to think she might be forced into the arms of age and ugliness—doomed to become the partner of some sordid wretch, intent only on his own gratification.

An accidental movement of her head discovering him to her, interrupted his reflections; he directly approached her, and, with a glow upon his cheek, not less bright at the moment than that which suffused hers, expressed his apprehension of having startled her, as, upon seeing him, she had hastily risen.

“No,” she replied, only surprised her, as she did not expect to see him at the moment. Then added, that unable to rest, owing to the impression recent incidents had made upon her mind, she had quitted the shady covert in which he had left her, in order to indulge herself with the contemplation of the surrounding scenery—“In which, I fancy,” continued she, “you were quite absorbed at the moment I discovered you.”

“I was indeed,” said Osmond, raising involuntarily his eyes to hers, “absorbed at that moment in the contemplation of one of the loveliest objects in creation.”

“Indeed!” she replied, with a deeper blush, and a lurking smile, which implied
her

her better understanding the import of his words than she appeared willing to let him imagine ; “ where there are so many, as in the present instance, I should think it rather a difficult matter to select a particular one.”

“ By no means,” said Osmond ; “ the one I allude to is so superlatively lovely, that I think it next to impossible any one could hesitate in giving it a decided preference.”

“ Well, perhaps so,” she returned, with carelessness, but a carelessness which Osmond could not help thinking more feigned than felt.

The conversation now turned upon the enchanting prospects stretched around them, which brought to his mind, Osmond said, the delightful shades of Acerenza.

“ Ah ! delightful shades indeed,” echoed Miss Raymond, with a sigh.

“ Yes, by me they will ever be regarded as such,” said Osmond ; “ since it was amongst them I first beheld——”

He

He paused, suddenly recollected himself, and looked confused.

Miss Raymond appeared not less so; and from this circumstance Osmond was convinced she perfectly comprehended what he had been on the point of saying.

After a moment of evidently painful embarrassment on both sides, she motioned to return to the recess, but was prevented by the unexpected approach of her mother.

“My dear girl,” she exclaimed, in hurried accents; “you have caused me inexpressible terror, by quitting my side.”

Miss Raymond expressed the greatest regret for having done so, since the occasion of alarm to her; accounting to her, as she had previously done to Osmond, for having quitted their shady covert.

“I cannot wonder indeed,” replied Mrs. Raymond, “at the impression made upon your imagination by recent scenes. I trust now,” smiling a little archly, “you have had quite enough of the terrific.—You
must

must know, Mr. Munro," turning and addressing herself to him, "this young lady took it into her head, owing to the perusal of romances, to wish to find herself the inhabitant of some dilapidated mansion, where she would be likely to lose herself in old corridors, marble halls, and subterraneous passages—in short, have the sublime sensation of terror every instant awakened in her mind; and no one will deny, I believe, that this wish has been accomplished."

"Yes, but my dear mother," returned Miss Raymond, blushing and half-smiling, "to have rendered our adventures truly horrific and romantic, we should have seen a spectre, and met with a mutilated manuscript."

"Well, Madam," said Osmond, "though I cannot complete them in one way, by raising a spectre, I can in another, by producing such a manuscript as you allude to," suddenly recollecting the one he had picked up in the castle.

"Really?"

“ Really ?” said Miss Raymond, with quickness ; “ and pray what are its contents ? ”

“ That, Madam, I cannot say, as I have not yet had time to look over it.”

Mrs. Raymond enquired how he had met with it, and on being informed—
“ Well,” said she, “ I acknowledge my curiosity is so awakened, that, as we are here in perfect safety, and will not, you know, recommence our journey for some hours, I should like, if not disagreeable to you, to hear it.”

Osmond, bowing, assured her he was happy beyond expression at having an opportunity of obliging her.

They seated themselves on the spot Miss Raymond had just before occupied, and which was exactly such a one as the poet has described,

“ The sunless side

“ Of a romantic mountain, forest-crown'd.”

Osmond

Osmond hastily ran his eye over the manuscript, to assure himself there was nothing in it improper for their ear, and having satisfied himself there was not, and prepared them for numerous breaks in the narrative, occasioned by that cormorant Time, thus began :—

CHAP. XII.

TO LAURA MARTINELLI.

“AT the moment in which we were bidding each other adieu, you charged me, my dear Laura, to write to you, and give you an account of the stately, though solitary, edifice, in which my ruined fortunes have occasioned me to take refuge, in order to avoid the manifold injuries and indignities which persons of low pride and illiberal minds are but too apt to heap upon those who have unexpectedly fallen from a height that once provoked their envy—above all, you charged me to give you the particulars of the event of which
you

you say you have hitherto only been able to glean imperfect information, to which its desertion to a few domestics is owing; not doubting my being able to collect these for you, in consequence of being on the spot where that event happened.

“Your commands must ever meet with obedience from me; and in conformity to them I now take up my pen.

“The castle of Clarizio, whose solemn echoes, after long slumbering, the sighs of my grief have again awakened, is at this period just such a retreat as despair would wish to make choice of—a proud record of the taste of former times, a melancholy monument of the antiquity and greatness of the family to which it belongs.

It stands upon the banks of a rapid river, which produces a melancholy noise, owing to rocks that in many places cause it to fret and murmur in its course. On every side aspiring shades surround it,
amidst

amidst whose deep recesses, ravens, and other ill-omened birds, lodge securely. Ruin and desolation every where encompass it: its stately towers are decayed, its battlements are broken; ivy enwreaths its windows, and the long grass waves where once the conquering banner hung: in the furniture, or once gorgeous ornaments, scarce a vestige of former magnificence remains; and the few aged domestics who inhabit it, seem, like the building itself, bending beneath the influence of that destroying power which conquers all. From them I have gathered the particulars you desire to be acquainted with.

“The Marchese Montana was an only child. He was naturally of a haughty and vindictive spirit; and the evil propensities which, by proper attention, might have been subdued, were encreased and finally confirmed by false indulgence and pernicious flattery.

He was just emerging into manhood,
when

when a contagious disorder carried off both his parents, and thus left him uncontrolled master of his own actions. Ardent in his passions, he hesitated not to avail himself, to its fullest extent, of the liberty he had thus prematurely acquired—immediately entering upon a course of dissipation, which he persevered in for years, to the great detriment of his morals, health, and character. At length satiety began to prevail: he grew disgusted with all that had formerly delighted him, and in consequence resolved on marrying, and withdrawing from the scenes that had so long witnessed his excesses.

About the period he formed this resolution, fame began to blazon forth the charms and accomplishments of the Count Clarizio's heiress, the young and lovely Isabella; but at the court of Naples, where they were thus extolled, she had never yet made her appearance: to a few accidental visitors at the remote castle of her father, she was indebted."

"One

“ One of the breaks,” said Osmond, “ which I prepared you for.”

“ The description given by these accidental visitors of her charms, so impressed itself upon the imagination of Montana, that he would immediately have made overtures for her hand, but for an apprehension of their being exaggerated. The idea, however, of losing so lovely a creature, as he was sensible Isabella must be, if at all according with the portrait drawn of her, rendered him miserable, and at length induced him to determine on sending some one in whom he could confide to the castle of Clarizio, for the purpose of ascertaining exactly what she was, and thus having his suspense and indecision respecting her terminated.

The person whom, after some deliberation, he thought proper to employ, was a youth of the name of Carlo Baronimi, the descendant of a noble but unfortunate house, in the fate of which some particular circum-

circumstances, not necessary to narrate, had so strongly interested Montana, who was not altogether destitute of those qualities which constitute the nobility of the heart, that, on its final downfall, he took this its sole surviving branch under his protection, and educated him with a care and tenderness that caused it to be reported, and generally believed, that he meant to make him his heir.

The heart of the youthful Carlo dilated with transport at the confidence reposed in him by his benefactor. He exulted to think he had an opportunity of obliging him, feeling, whenever such a one occurred, the debt of gratitude he owed him less oppressive.

Attended by one chosen domestic, he set out for the castle of Clarizio, where he purposed introducing himself, under the pretext of having lost his way.

He travelled with such expedition, that towards the close of day, just as the yellow radiance that had long trembled
over

over it was fading away, he entered the forest of Clarizio. The tale he had fabricated for the purpose of gaining admission to the stately mansion it embowered, succeeded as he wished. On giving in his name at the portal, he was invited to enter, and conducted through a numerous train of domestics to the banquetting-room, where the Count and Countess sat at supper. Nothing could be more gracious than their reception of him. As soon as the ceremonies of introduction were over, and he had taken a seat beside his noble hostess, he looked for Isabella. Three young ladies occupied places at the table, but all so equally and so exquisitely lovely, that, struck with surprise and admiration, he could scarce forbear exclaiming—"Are there then three Isabellas?"

He soon found, however, that not one of these answered to that name, that they were merely visitors at the castle, and that Isabella herself was then confined by a slight indisposition to her apartment. Im-
patience

patience to behold her made him forsake his couch at an early hour the ensuing morning: he found the Count and Countess in a magnificent saloon, opening to a garden, yet glittering with the dews of early day, and exhibiting at once all the verdure of spring and luxuriance of summer.

But from inanimate objects his attention was speedily diverted by a young female advancing down a vista towards the saloon: on her his eyes instantly became rivetted—for never had so lovely an object before met their gaze.

“ Oh! if this be Isabella (he inwardly exclaimed), blest indeed will Montana be, should he gain her hand. Oh! if this be her, I must hence without delay, or endanger my fidelity to him.”

She entered, and was presented to him as the daughter of his host. He perceived the danger of tarrying another hour at Clarizio; yet still he lingered; and by consciously exposing himself to temptation,

tion, became overpowered by it: the seductive softness of Isabella's manners completed the conquest of her eyes, and he became a traitor to honour, gratitude, and Montana—not scrupling to let the Count and Countess imagine, as a means of inducing them to favour his addresses to their daughter, that it was indeed the intention of the Marchese Montana to make him his heir; neither to write to this unsuspecting friend that she by no means justified the report given of her charms; notwithstanding which, however, it was his intention, if his patron objected not to the measure, to endeavour to recommend himself to her favour, his situation in life rendering birth and fortune of more estimation in his eyes than personal accomplishments.

As he expected, Montana readily and joyfully accorded him the permission he had thus artfully solicited, to pay his addresses to the Lady Isabella, accompanied with his best wishes for the success of his suit.

These

These wishes were speedily accomplished. Carlo, yet scarcely in the bloom of life, and possessed of all that heaven or earth could bestow to render him amiable—the finest symmetry of form, the most seducing manners, eyes eloquently expressive of the movements of his soul, the rarest and the most dazzling accomplishments—soon succeeded in inspiring Isabella with wishes responsive to his own.

Her happiness was too precious to her parents to permit them to control her inclination in the present instance, although an immediate, instead of expected, acquisition of fortune, would have been a very agreeable circumstance to them; their own, through various circumstances, being so much impaired, that, at this period, they found it nearly inadequate to the maintenance of that splendor hereditary pride made them anxious to keep up.

The nuptials of their daughter agreed on, and to which Carlo contrived a plausible pretext both to him and them for not inviting Montana, the most magnifi-

cent fetes took place at the castle in honour of them. Amongst the other entertainments given on this occasion at Clarizio, was a grand tournament in the Spanish style, arranged by Carlo, and contrived by him, in order to obtain a better opportunity of displaying his fine figure and accomplishments to his mistress than he had yet obtained.

This entertainment was held in the great lawn before the castle, and at either side of which elevated balconies were erected for the ladies.

A troop of Christian knights first entered the field, headed by Carlo, and habited alike in coats of purple and yellow silk, with shining helmets, adorned with waving plumes of white feathers, gold-cased scymeters suspended from their left sides by a chain of the same metal, and on their left arms polished steel targets—the device, two hands united, in gold inlaid—

THE MOTTO.

'Tis through our valour won.

Next

Next followed a troop of Moorish knights, habited in coats of scarlet, richly embroidered with white, and flowers of gold, gorgeous scymeters falling from their sides, and their shields of ozier—the device, the globe supported by Atlas.

THE MOTTO.

Until fatigued I grow.

To these succeeded the Saracen chiefs, mounted on their fiery steeds, their cloaks and jackets richly shining, of green and orange hue, their scymeters embossed with gold, and suspended by chains of precious stones, their targets studded with emeralds—the device, a savage with a large club.

THE MOTTO.

Surrounded by the green.

Carlo triumphed over every competitor. The transported Isabella flung perfumes on him, as, with a low obeisance, he passed the balcony where she was seated the queen

of the day ; and the air was rent with acclamations, on his again approaching it, to receive from her fair hand the prize allotted to the victor.

To this day of pleasure succeeded a night of pain, or rather torture, to Carlo. His native honour and generosity, revived by the chivalrous exercises in which he had been engaged, he reviewed with horror and detestation the treachery of his conduct towards Montana ; and in the paroxism of repentance and remorse it excited, resolved on surrendering Isabella.

“ Oh, Montana,” he wildly exclaimed, as he formed this soul-harrowing resolution, “ to what a cruel alternative have you reduced me ! Could you not, should you not have foreseen, that if the beauty of Isabella accorded with the portrait drawn of it, the ardent eye of youth could scarcely gaze on her with impunity ? Too inconsiderate friend, you have undone me, since, if I give her up, I die—if I persevere in making her mine, I relinquish that without which life will be hateful. End—
end,

end, oh Heaven! in mercy end this dreadful struggle between passion and virtue, by taking me to thyself!"

To regain the height, however, from which impetuous love had hurried him, was beyond the resolution of Carlo to attempt; and in order to try and reconcile himself to his conduct, he had recourse to sophistry, persuading, or rather trying to persuade, himself (for neither reason nor conscience are as easily silenced as we but too frequently wish them to be) that he should act still more basely, more unjustifiably now, if, after winning the heart of Isabella, he gave her up, than he had previously done towards his friend. In a word, love triumphed over every other consideration; and he became the husband of Isabella, flattering himself that in her arms he should quickly lose all tormenting remembrances. But he soon found that he had indeed but flattered himself, when he indulged such a hope—found that while memory held its place, he must be miserable—soon found,
that

that guilt never yet laid a foundation for happiness.

The anguish inflicted by his continual self-reproaches was aggravated by the constant dread he was in of his treachery being discovered by Montana, and of consequence his being held up to public scorn ; for well he knew Montana was not a man to be offended with impunity—so well indeed, that but for the restraints he fancied a high sense of honour imposed upon him, he would not, from his knowledge of his warm and vindictive temper, have been without an apprehension of becoming his victim in every sense of the word, should his perfidy be ever betrayed to him.”

END OF VOL. III.



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